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# COMICS scene

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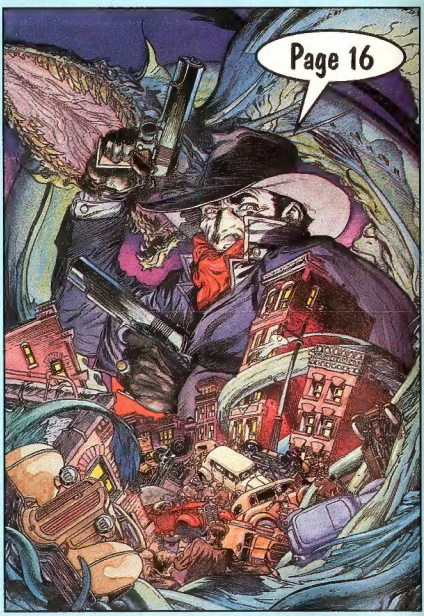


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Rune Art: Barry Windsor-Smith/Copyright 1993 Malibu


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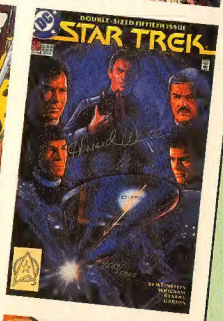

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# WORD BALLOONS

## Please, Mr. Postman

There's one thing missing from this issue—the letters page. It isn't here. It's not around. Absent. Gone fishing. And why? Well, there simply didn't seem to be *any* point to it.

It wasn't a matter of space. Real estate could have been found. We might have squeezed it in next to Bob Miller's Animation Scene column (which debuted last issue). Or maybe nestled Lettering between articles on semi-psychotic, awfully neurotic vigilantes—and boy, do we have a bunch of them, from The Shadow and Batman to Daredevil and the Punisher. (Do Sam & Max qualify?) There *was* a place for Lettering.

Cartoons, we had the cartoons to illustrate, as always, the letters. In fact, a brace of them appear this issue anyhow, back on our irregular Toons page.

Nope, the reason wasn't space or lack of toons or mere editorial whim. We just didn't—don't—have enough letters.

*You haven't been writing.*

Why? Well, I dunno. But I could venture some speculations, postulate some theories, consider some options—i.e., I could guess.

To wit: *You have nothing to say.* Comics fans with no opinions? Not in this universe, bub. It couldn't happen. It defies belief. We have opinions on *everything*: Heroes' costumes and their love lives and villains who should(n't) return and who's stronger than whom and new titles for comic-book letter pages and who the best colorist is (Tom Palmer, right?) and how dare so-&-so do such-&-such to whichever character with the lead pipe in the conservatory (They killed Harry Osborne? Reed Richards? Superman? How dare they? Did those folks all have insurance? Does Lois Lane have to give back a bundle to Metropolitan Life? And what about the baby?) Certainly, there's no lack of opinions out there. This *can't* be the reason.

*You have no comments or complaints because the magazine is absolutely perfect.* Yeah, sure, right. I believe *that.* C'mon, you've got to be kidding. First off, this is a human endeavor, so perfection's unlikely. And secondly, has there ever been *any* magazine in history that absolutely *all* of its readers loved in its *entirety*? I think not.

*There are no letters because no one reads COMICS SCENE.* Well, that explains their absence, but sales figures indicate that you all *are* buying the magazine. And since COMICS SCENE doesn't come polybagged with trading cards like one of those allegedly collectible, practically useless price guides, we do assume you're actually reading the magazine, not putting it away unopened in a safety deposit box, awaiting the millennium.

And finally, *you have other arenas in which to play.* As I've noted before, the growth of computer bulletin boards has provided super-fast electric feedback to ideas and opinions expressed by their users. If you write a letter of comment and criticism to a magazine or a comic book, production schedules guarantee that it won't be published—if at all—until months later. And any published letters responding to your letter, of course, won't appear till months after that. Thanks to the glories of cyberspace, you can issue an opinion in the forum, have it "published" almost immediately and wait for the replies which will begin within minutes. These computer landscapes seem to be assuming some of the functions previously only performed by fanzines, APAs and magazine/comics letters pages.

That's a shame. Because letters pages were crucial in the growth of fandom in the 1960s as comic-book editors like Julie Schwartz and Stan Lee actually printed full addresses with reader letters. Thus, one fan was easily able to get in touch with another way out of state and then yet another and another....

We still want to hear what you have to say. What you like about this magazine. What you don't. What you want to see in the future. What you think about specific articles, specific creators, specific trends. Let's keep the letter column tradition alive. Write COMICS SCENE, Lettering, 475 Park Avenue South, 8th Flr, NY, NY 10016.

Lettering will be back. We just hope you readers will be there, with letters, to be part of it.

*—David McDonnell/Editor*


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# ANIMATION SCENE

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## Ghost Host

**Space Ghost A Talk Show Host?** It's true! The stellar superhero has zapped the likes of Zorak, Metallus and the Creature King; now the Cartoon Network wants him to battle David Letterman, Jay Leno and Rush Limbaugh in the late night TV arena. After its December 10 premiere, *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast* airs weekly at 11 p.m. Friday nights beginning January 21, 1994. The 15-minute show will combine animated footage of Space Ghost, voiced by Gary Owens, with live-action interviews of celebrity guests.

Originally, Space Ghost had a second banana. Not Blip, but Herve Villechaize, who died on September 4. At presstime, a replacement hadn't been determined.

Space's talk show was conceived by Mike Lazzo, vice president of programming for the Cartoon Network. Thirteen episodes will be produced for the first season.

You may remember that the Ghost harbored two tag-along twins, Jan and Jace. In Timothy Zahn's latest *Star Wars* novel, *The Last Command*, Princess Leia gives birth to twins, Jaina and Jacen. Jan and Jace; Jaina and Jacen. Could it be that Zahn and George Lucas are *Space Ghost* fans?

**What's Up With the Looney Tunes:** One *new* Bugs Bunny theatrical short is in the works, directed by former *Taz-Mania* director Doug McCarthy. He'll helm "Carrotblanca," inspired by last year's 50th anniversary of *Casablanca*, with Bugs playing the Humphrey Bogart lead.

ABC plans to eventually broadcast this short on *The Bugs Bunny & Tweety Show*, to bolster its sagging ratings. Lately, that wascally wabbit has been losing to a Fox—the Fox Network's *X-Men*.

The hilarious "Blooper Bunny," directed by Greg Ford and Terry Lennon, completed almost two years ago, has yet to see release. "Rock-a-bye Rabbit," directed by Darrell Van Citters, animated two years ago, has yet to be colored. *Bugs Bunny's Lunar Tunes*, directed by Nancy Beiman, intended as a CBS-TV special, has gone directly to home video. (See CS YEARBOOK #1 for further info).

**Sliding Down the Water Spout:** It's *The Itsy-Bitsy Spider*, the first TV cartoon by Hyperion Productions, makers of *The Brave Little Toaster, Rover Dangerfield* and *Bebe's Kids*. Based on the 1992 theatrical short preceding *Bebe's Kids*, the series stars a shy but feisty arachnid, Itsy (voiced by Frank Welker), his human friend Leslie (Francesca Marie-Smith), the villainous, overbearing Adrienne Van Leydon (Charlotte Rae) and her cat Langston (Welker again). The spider's chief nemesis is the robotic Exterminator (*Max Headroom*'s Matt Frewer), whose arsenal includes more than bug spray.

Paramount Pictures—co-owner of the USA Network—has commissioned Hyperion to do 13 half-hour stories for USA's Cartoon Express. Guest voices include Gary Owens, Tom Poston, Eileen Brennan and Loren Lester (Robin from *Batman*). Alice Ghostley voices Poppea the ladybug and Roddy McDowall is Richard, a flea in the episode "Basic Insect."

Since the show's on cable, it has gags that normally wouldn't be allowed on CBS, ABC or Fox. What kind? Tune in and see.

**New Nicktoons:** Although Nickelodeon premiered *Rocko's Modern Life* September 18, they commissioned scripts for a *second* season two months earlier! On tap for the first season are 13 episodes.

Meanwhile, Nickelodeon has decommissioned *Doug* after 52 episodes. The series, created by Jim Jinkins and produced by Jumbo Pictures, had been nominated for an Emmy and a CableACE award, and won a Gold Award at the Houston World Fest. On September 26, *Doug* began its fourth and final season of 13 new episodes. After that—reruns.

Jumbo produced a pilot, *Psyched for Snuppa*, which may become the next Nicktoons series after *Rocko's Modern Life*.

**Déja Vù Under the Sea:** Viewers of Steven Spielberg's *seaQuest DSV* may have noticed similarities not just to *Star Trek*, but to another underwater series that occurs in the early 21st century featuring a talking sea creature: *Jabberjaw*! Isn't it interesting that both he and Darwin the Dolphin are voiced by the *same* man, Frank (*Aladdin*'s Abu) Welker? Of course, we know where it all started: Spielberg's *Jaws*.

**They're Back:** Speaking of Spielberg, *The Land Before Time* dinos will be returning in new adventures, not to movie screens but to home video. Buoyed by the sales of the first *Land* on video, MCA/Universal Home Video has ordered new stories to be made at Universal's cartoon studio (animation done in the Orient), *not* by Don Bluth. In *The Land Before Time, Part Two*, Littlefoot and the gang contend with a baby *Tyrannosaurus rex*, a pair of comic-relief but villainous velociraptors and a herd of angry *T-rexes* invading the Great Valley. Part Three is already in production, about Littlefoot falling in love, and a Part Four is under consideration. Meanwhile, the studio has declared the original *Land* video to be "on moratorium."

**Congratulations** to the staff of *Batman: The Animated Series* for winning a primetime Emmy Award September 18, for the episode "Robin's Reckoning, Part One." Other nominees for Best Animated Program (one hour or less) were *Inspector Gadget Saves Christmas, Liquid Television, The World of Peter Rabbit* ("The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny") and *The Ren & Stimpy Show* ("Son of Stimpy").

**The Cartoon Network Gets Real:** That is, they're using "real time" computer-generated animation for a new character, Moxy, to represent the network.

While traditional cel animation takes months, real-time animation occurs instantaneously. A performer/puppeteer is outfitted with sensors; his motions are translated digitally

**Back to back superspies: In the '60s, he was noted espionage master Secret Squirrel (left). Now, restyled for the '90s, he's a Super Secret Secret Squirrel.**

Super Secret Secret Squirrel Art: Trademark & Copyright 1993 Hanna-Barbera Cartoons, Inc./Copyright 1993 TBS, Inc.



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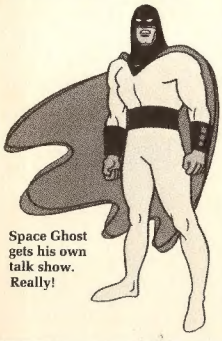
into a computer-generated model. When the performer moves, the character moves, while a computer technician controls the facial expressions. John Stevenson provides Moxy's body movements while comedian "Bobcat" Goldthwait supplies his nervous voice. The "real-time" animation is done at Colossal Pictures, the San Francisco studio that produces MTV's *Liquid Television*. Moxy's comedy bits are written by Alec Berg and Jeff Schaffer.

The orange canine made his network debut in "The Great International Toon-In" on November 26, hosting a marathon of cartoons on six of Ted Turner's cable networks.

Since then, Moxy unexpectedly breaks into the Cartoon Network with his own "Pirate Network," "live" from his broom closet at the Cartoon Network. Moxy dispenses cartoon trivia, reviews and comments until he realizes it's time to show the next cartoon.

Starting December 5, Moxy hosts a regular series, *The Moxy Pirate Show*, Sundays at 8 p.m. EST. Each week for an hour, Moxy shows his favorite cartoons (as determined, in reality, by programming VP Mike Lazzo). The Cartoon Network has commissioned 26 episodes for the first season.

Moxy isn't the first "real-time" cartoon star. His predecessor, Waldo, was a character created by Pacific Data Images who appeared on *The Jim Henson Hour* in 1989. However, the Cartoon Network claims that Moxy is the first real-time *full-bodied* character with working arms, hands, legs and feet (which Waldo lacked).



**Space Ghost gets his own talk show. Really!**

**Hanna-Barbera Happenings:** Those of you tuning in to *2 Stupid Dogs* on Superstation TBS and the syndicated *Funtastic World of Hanna-Barbera* have noticed the return of that superspy from the '60s, Secret Squirrel, whose design has been "updated" by artist Paul Rudish for the '90s.

According to series co-producer Donovan Cook, "The biggest liberty we took with the show is changing all the human characters into animals. It's always fun to caricature humans with animals, with the Chief as this big stuffy musk ox. Also, we wanted the show to contrast with *2 Stupid Dogs*, where the dogs are dogs and the people are people. We didn't want people to think that 2 Stupid Dogs live in the same world as Secret Squirrel.

"Although we changed the world and the look a little bit, he's still the same great character. To Secret Squirrel, there's nothing as great as going out and using the funkiest gadgets in the world to capture psycho-villains."

Who's next for resurrection and redesign? The Hair Bear Bunch and the Cattanooga Cats, to be integrated into the second season of *2 Stupid Dogs*. Also in redevelopment is the world's mightiest insect: Atom Ant.

*—Bob Miller*

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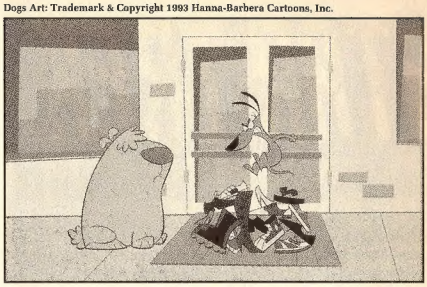

**In this world, people are people and *2 Stupid Dogs* are, well, *2 Stupid Dogs*.**


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# New DEVIL

## *After a fall from grace, the Man Without Fear dares to take a leap of faith.*

By DREW BITTNER

Art: Scott McDaniel/Pat Garrahy

Matt Murdock has been part of the Marvel Universe for 30 years—but no more. The lawyer-turned-vigilante dies at the end of his current storyline...only to open the next chapter in the life of Daredevil, the Man Without Fear!

Rest assured, Daredevil isn't following in the footsteps of other heroes for this radical change in his life. "Basically, he *fakes* his own death," explains writer D.G. Chichester. "He sacrifices the Matt Murdock part of his life so that he can protect the people around him."

Chichester promises that the results of this upheaval will be dramatic and far-reaching. "We want to establish how important both parts of his life are," Chichester says. "They're balanced against each other—a lawyer who sometimes breaks the law to fight crime as a vigilante. What will he do when that balance is thrown off?"

**"We're not sacrificing anything that makes *Daredevil* unique," D.G. Chichester says. "We're pumping him up to be competitive."**

Daredevil's inner conflict will be compounded by some external problems as well. In order to continue his

**"The new look [of *Daredevil*] plays to my strengths as an artist," says Scott McDaniel.**

ceaseless war on street crime in defense of the common man, Daredevil decides *he* needs a little more protection. DD gets a completely different look, courtesy of artist Scott McDaniel.

"He wears a completely *defensive* suit," McDaniel remarks. "It has a very tough visual element, but it doesn't have any offensive weaponry—it's just so that if he's knocked down, he isn't knocked out."

"Daredevil was jumping into fights wearing nothing but red pajamas," Chichester adds. "He's an amazing acrobat, but that can't save his life. So, we put him into a suit of armor."

This new suit isn't a heavy shell; it's actually a "bio-mimetic" suit that moves with him. "He isn't hindered by it, either in movement or extra weight," McDaniel affirms. "He'll still be swinging off light poles and bouncing off awnings, all the stuff he used to do. We've changed his billy clubs, so that he can connect them to make a bo staff, or link them together with a chain to make nunchukus. He will have weaponry, it just won't be exploding/blasting stuff and it won't be part of his armor."

With Murdock's apparent death and the new look Daredevil sports, the world is going to wonder who this hero is. Several heroes will have a "first encounter" with this "new" Daredevil, not knowing what to expect.

"Now we have this character running around calling himself Daredevil in a more aggressive outfit," Chichester says. "The people who knew that Matt was Daredevil think he's dead and they all think somebody is taking up the Daredevil guise. Matt won't tell anyone that it's really him in the new costume, because he feels he can't afford to leak that information. What that'll do is open a new round of confrontations and conflicts with characters like Spider-Man and the Punisher, guys he has known and worked with for years. They'll be a little wary of the new guy. Plus, the man on the street knew Daredevil was a certain kind of hero, but the 'new' Daredevil doesn't come with a track record. Some people will assume it's the same guy, others will want to test the water and see how he reacts.

"This opens up many new possibilities, especially when we bring back the Kingpin," Chichester adds. "Kingpin doesn't know this is his old enemy in a new outfit, so there's a whole new sense of balance between them. We get to create an entirely *new* relationship between these two, very old enemies."

With Murdock dead, Matt devises a new persona as his secret identity: a street-level confidence man. "He's going to be working cons on people, so that he can get closer to the information network that exists on the street,"

**Daredevil, sans Matt Murdock, takes life by sight after his fall and begins anew.**

**Following his "Fall From Grace," Daredevil encounters the "Tree of Knowledge." In a New York City besieged by terrorists, he must find the truth to the attacks.**

Chichester says. "His aim is to get information he can act on as Daredevil, by making himself part of that whole street world.

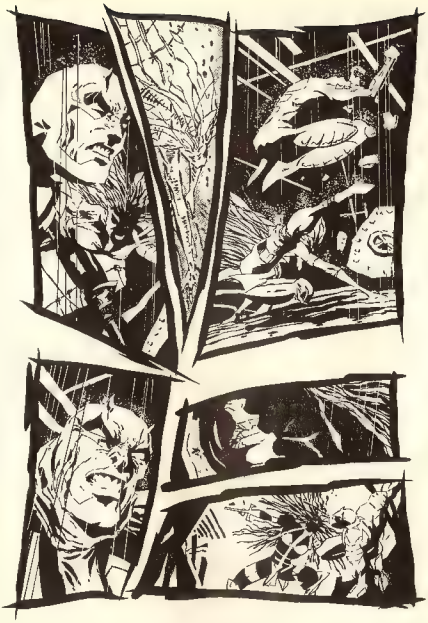
"It's opening a whole new kettle of worms, to coin a phrase, because Matt is playing this con-man as a sighted person," the writer reveals. "In the past, he could always fall back on his real-life blindness—but now he's a 'sighted' guy and is supposed to be able to read street signs. Someone might ask, 'How does this color look on me?' and he has to come up with an answer! How will he react to questions like that? When he had a cane and glasses, nobody would ask, but now he really has to work twice as hard to keep up the facade."

With his new identity, Daredevil will be surrounded by a new cast of supporting characters, all designed to draw on the vibrant cosmopolitan mix of New York City.

Explains Chichester, "One is a film

professor from Columbia or Empire State—whichever place we can use. He's a very colorful individual; he'll start to tell stories of strange times he has had in prison, about long-ago drug raids, and he's always stopping himself midway through.

"One major supporting character is a blacksmith who helps Matt set up his new digs. We wanted to give him a solid home base with a gym structure to work out in. In the past, there were lots of scenes of Daredevil practicing his acrobatic prowess. He basically asks for some parallel bars in this loft space he has set up and this guy, a crazed Christopher Lloyd type, comes in. When Matt gets back, he finds this crazy Renaissance/medieval art thing, with twisted bars and functional sculpture. It looks very wild and it gives Murdock a great workout space; I think Scott really loves having that area to work with," Chichester says. "We needed to create something that gives Daredevil a home, and locating him in a very specific part of New York helps do that. [Martin Scorsese's film] *After Hours* is a good model for what we want to do, introducing a level of New York that has never been explored."



**McDaniel's striking layout design adds a dramatic flair to the book.**

The first major plotline for the all-new Daredevil will generate plenty of tangled threads. A wave of vicious terrorist attacks sweeps through New York City, driving the population into a panic. Superhero teams including the Avengers and the Fantastic Four are pulled into the situation, but Daredevil has his own perspective.

Says Chichester, "The main thrust of the story, which we're calling 'Tree of Knowledge,' involves this wave of terrorism that hits the city, hard. The big heroes ally themselves with the military to declare a form of martial law in parts of city. There aren't tanks in the street or F-15s over Fifth Avenue, but there's a lockdown on civil liberties. On one level, this doesn't sit well with Captain America; he doesn't believe the individuals claiming responsibility are genuine. He goes on a covert mission of his own to find out what's happening.

"And meanwhile, Daredevil sees the riots and the clampdown affecting the average people and the community he interacts with. He goes to find out what he can. Then, the story brings these two heroes together and leads to a revelation of who's really behind all this," the writer says. "It's going to be a vastly revamped HYDRA, who are hiding behind the destruction to tap into an 'information highway' network set up for the 21st century. Since New York is a hub of communications and information, they can use the riots to position themselves to take control. To complicate things, the Snake Group, an inner circle of The Hand that we introduce in 'Fall from Grace,' wants to break away from HYDRA, and this causes a whole different set of problems. They're a wild card we plan to keep playing with, to make life hard for heroes and villains alike.

"Cap and Daredevil come into conflict over the central issue: How much info do you release and how much do you clamp down on? That's why we call the storyline 'Tree of Knowledge.' It isn't just a cool biblical reference, though we'll probably use more of those—seems natural for a guy called Daredevil."

As the "Tree" sprouts new leaves, the old roots turn up with some surprising bends and twists. Chichester says that both Karen Page and Foggy Nelson have their own subplots, which indirectly connect with Daredevil's.

"Foggy is enticed into working for what's left of Wilson Fisk's [Kingpin's] old TV station," he explains. "To stay in business, the station runs nothing but yellow journalism and sensationalist crud, playing *any* trick to boost their ratings. Now, with Matt out of the picture, Foggy does this to survive.

**"Elektra is back!" exclaims Chichester. "This is the sort of thing we'll *really* catch heat for."**

All Art: Scott McDaniel/Hector Collazo

**The 30th anniversary of The Man Without Fear leads to great changes within his world.**

Foggy was lured into working for Fisk directly at one point; later on, he found out about the Kingpin and got out...but now we want to play with the idea that this guy just lost his best friend and law partner, he's floundering in a very competitive business, and he's suddenly, offered a job that *pays*. Well, Foggy doesn't want to do it, but he has to put food on the table. It's a very tough decision for him—it comes down to survival.

"Karen's story begins with Matt's death," he says. "She's grief-stricken and distraught. Then, these sleazebags from her past show up. Her past was very rocky, with heavy involvement in drugs and pornography, and they try to entice her back into that world. They have a scheme to star her in this hardcore virtual reality thing they're developing. Karen is on the edge for awhile, struggling to not fall back into that trap, and finds she has the fortitude to break free. She realizes there's something even more terrible in this situation—these slimy guys are getting teens and kids involved in this nasty, degrading life. She decides to take matters into her own hands and bust up their action. Karen teams up with Garrett, the killer cyborg from [Frank Miller's] *Elektra: Assassin* miniseries. By the story's end, Garrett's more on the side of heaven than hell—just barely. Working with Karen, his battles end up crossing with Daredevil. So this all ties together."

One major event in this book, certain to ignite a firestorm of controversy among Daredevil fans, is the return of Daredevil's true love. "It's Elektra!" Chichester exclaims. "That's the lead—Elektra is back! We had many ads around saying 'Featuring the return of a favorite character.' Well, now you all know who it is. This is the sort of thing we'll *really* catch heat for, lots more than the armor thing," he admits. "There are people who want Elektra to stay dead, or only want Frank Miller to handle her, or both. We were *very* hesitant to bring her back at all. The idea has been broached by others in the past, to bring her back to boost sales, but I didn't have any interest in doing that. Frank did a terrific job and we didn't want to do his stuff over again. I think we have avoided doing that.

"Eventually, we began to see the potential for character development that wasn't tapped before," he says. "We can move the character forward while keeping all these old elements in mind—and once we saw that potential, we became more open to the idea of bringing her back. The plans we have for her will interest people. Instead of shoving her into stories with these big knockdown, dragout battles, we just might open people's eyes. We want to do justice to Elektra, and to do that, we're introducing some significant differences. and putting our own perspective on things."

**Captain America plays a big part in "Tree of Knowledge" as he also tries to solve the terrorist mystery.**

While Daredevil's friends are getting on with their lives, so are his enemies. "Kingpin comes back, and we take him back to his origins," Chichester says. "He's a rough, street-level boss. When he regains his power, which we see in 'Tree of Knowledge,' he comes back as what he was at first: A boss controlling things hands-on at street level, instead of being in a skyscraper. It's a much different power

**"Daredevil is very strong on redemption," notes Chichester. "That's something too often overlooked."**

Design & Layout: Calvin Lee

All Daredevil Art & Characters: Trademark &Copyright 1993 Marvel Entertainment Group

**"We began to see the potential for character development," and decided to bring Electra back explains the writer.**

base he'll be operating with, which should make his dynamics with Daredevil completely new."

The book is much more fun for me these days," says artist McDaniel, who's working to create what Chichester terms "a kind of brooding intensity." "The red costume really is a classic, but does it work for someone who's purely a gymnast? He could use a little change, and it may not last forever. Bear in mind what's happening in the market today—flashy costumes get attention. And I have to admit, designing his new look was a lot of fun."

McDaniel finds Daredevil to be a completely different kind of hero. "I've done Spider-Man and some custom comic work," he says. "With that type of superhero, there's a tendency, and rightly so, to do over-the-top graphics, with explosions, speed lines, a foreshortened view, tricks with depth and bright visuals. But with Daredevil, that doesn't work. He's not swinging off a building with all these dramatic speed lines, he can't fly or punch through walls.

"The fun with *Daredevil* is designing the layout; it's a big source of enjoyment. There are action scenes, naturally, but each scene has certain mood. Just in the way you lay out the page, doing the position and size of the panels, you get a certain mood across. Artistically, that's fun. It's not just figure work, it's going beyond that to a sense of emotion, for what the reader goes through while reading this material. And I love that."

McDaniel says that working with Chichester is a very rewarding experience. "Dan inspires me artistically," he notes. "When he gives me a plot, I see those things in my head immediately. There are always at least five different ways to do each page because I have so many ideas. Dan's a very good writer, and I never feel stuck. If that ever happens, it's because I have conflicts over the way I want to do it. There's synergy between when he writes the plot and when I do the pencils, which I think or hope inspires his scripting. And my work is inked by Hector Collazo—if I knew how to ink well, I would want to ink like Hector, using his style and how he chooses to do things.

"Things are really happening on this book," McDaniel says. "It's funny. Because the book is so dark and moody, fans say I draw a sort of 'angry' Daredevil. I don't think of it as angry... maybe ticked off."

**Of everything, Chichester notes, "I would rather work on this book, and attract people with some dazzling stories backed up by fantastic art."**

Through it all, although Daredevil undergoes some extreme changes, some things will stay the same—most importantly, his commitment to personal justice and protecting his community. Chichester sees Daredevil as a redemptive character, whose violence is minimal; his willingness to give a crook a second chance is more important than how tough he is.

"That's something too often overlooked," he says. "Daredevil is very strong on redemption. He would check in on a guy in a work-release program, and encourage him to stay clean and make something of his life. That's just the kind of guy he is.

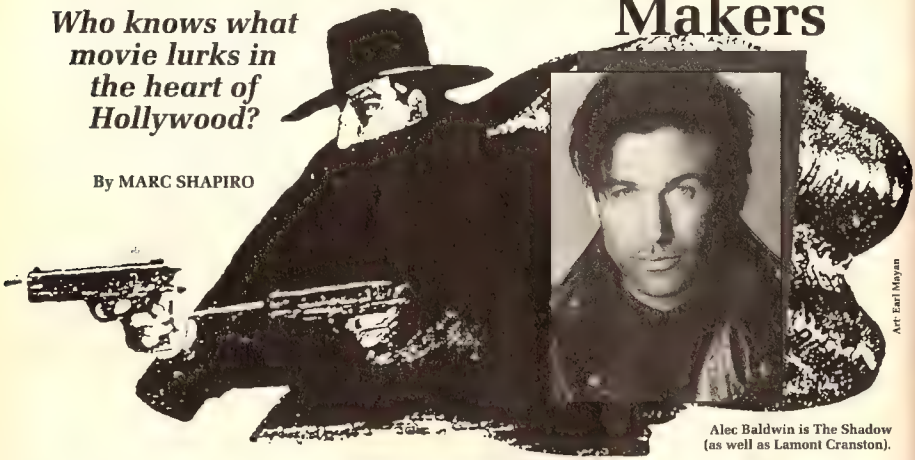
"Tough-guy heroes are good for a quick visceral thrill, but most of my friends and I grew up liking the sense of good triumphing over evil," Chichester says. "That 'big picture' is a better reason to win than 'I can wail on you more than you can wail on me.' Yeah, Daredevil has a tough side, but he has humanistic impulses many newer heroes don't have. I think it's important for this decent, moral

*(continued on page 18)*

# The Shadow Makers

## *Who knows what movie lurks in the heart of Hollywood?*

By MARC SHAPIRO



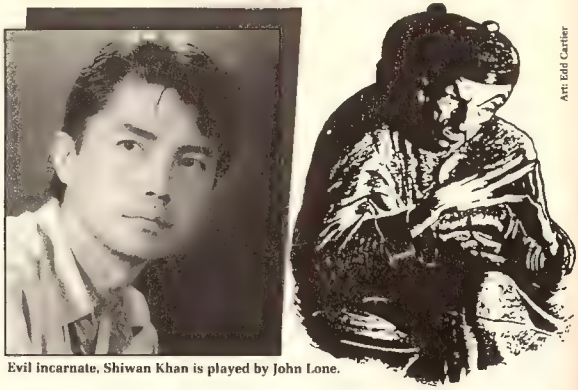
Art: Earl Mayan

Alec Baldwin is The Shadow (as well as Lamont Cranston).

The Shadow has dwelt in the dark for the better part of 60 years, guns always ready to blaze away at evil. But can a crime-fighting hero (created by Walter Gibson) who made his mark primarily in pulp novels and radio shows long before television was a twinkle in anybody's eye capture a '90s audience weaned on MTV? It seems a logical question. And producer Martin Bregman has a logical answer.

"That's why you're here," he chuckles to the roomful of media gathered to officially witness the launching of the big-budget motion picture version of *The Shadow* (which began filming at various Southern California locations on September 27).

This confab, played out against the backdrop of the Cobalt Club, the hangout of The Shadow's alter-ego Lamont Cranston in the film, also features appearances by the stellar cast: Alec (*Beetlejuice*) Baldwin, Penelope Ann (*Kindergarten Cop*) Miller, John (*The Last Emperor*) Lone, Peter (*Young Frankenstein*) Boyle, Sir Ian (*And the Band Played On*) McKellen, Jonathan Winters and last-minute cast addition Tim (*Legend*) Curry. But, for the moment, it is producer Bregman who heralds the coming of *The Shadow* (slated for a summer '94 release).



Art: Edd Cartier

Evil incarnate, Shiwan Khan is played by John Lone.

"*The Shadow* is kind of an American folk legend," says the producer. "And he's a truly original character. In the '30s, it was easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys; the good guys wore white and the bad guys wore black. But suddenly there was The Shadow: A crimefighter who wore black and who knew what evil lurked in the hearts of men."

For Bregman, the start of shooting

Art: Paul Orban

Portraying lovely Margo Lane is Penelope Ann Miller

and the previous movies [five low-budget features, one serial] didn't explore. Coming up with just the right villain was the big choice.

"Basically the whole process just required a lot of thought. Beyond that, it was just a matter of writing that first draft and then rewriting it for the rest of my natural life," he laughs.

Koepp goes on to point out that *The Shadow* was perfect for radio "because he was *invisible*. When he clouded men's minds, you weren't aware of it. Obviously, with film, we have the added attraction of being able to see it. There were new rules that had to be invented to make *The Shadow* a compelling visual event. Russell has worked very hard to find ways to man-

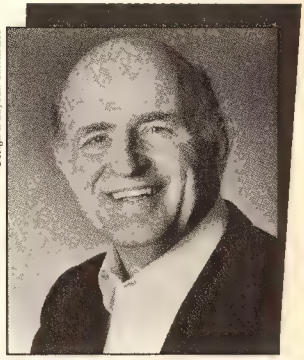
The Shadow: Copyright 1993 The Conde Nast Publications Inc. All Pulp Art: The Shadow Scrapbook All Photos: Courtesy Universal City Studios

represents the end of a long, personal odyssey. Universal Pictures originally acquired the rights more than a decade ago—with Bregman as producer—and announced to the world, in May 1980, that there would be a *Shadow* film.

Over the years, there were scripts by both original *Superman* screenwriter Leslie Newman and *Back to the Future*'s Bob Gale (which featured a gangster straight out of *White Heat*). The roster of directors either mentioned or actually associated with the project include Richard Donner, Joe Dante, Bob Zemeckis and Tom Holland. Among those noted as possible Shadows were John Travolta, Daniel Day-Lewis and Al Pacino (star of such Bregman-produced films as *Scarface* and *Scent of a Woman*).

Art: Tom Lovell

Design & Layout: Calvin Lee



Peter Boyle drives The Shadow as cabbie Moe Shrevnitz.

Directed by Russell (*Highlander*) Mulcahy from a David (*Jurassic Park*) Koepp script, *The Shadow* offers the origin of Lamont Cranston and his Shadow (Baldwin), who, according to sketchy story details, pits his powerful mental abilities against the telepathic super-villain Shiwan Khan (Lone) with the future of mankind at stake. Aiding The Shadow in this battle set against an indeterminate, '30s-toned time period are his friend and confidante Margo Lane (Miller), Boyle as cab driver and Shadow agent Moe Shrevnitz, McKellen as scientist Reinhardt Lane and Curry as techno-nerd Farley Claymore. Winters portrays Police Commissioner Wainwright Barth. Behind the scenes, key creative personnel include costume designer Bob (*Batman*) Ringwood and composer Jerry Goldsmith.

Baldwin, whose acquaintance with *The Shadow* begins and ends with the radio shows, claims to have discovered in Koepp's script "a definite split between Lamont Cranston and The Shadow.

"Cranston is a little devilish," he explains. "He uses his powers to seduce women in restaurants and for other questionable purposes. He's fun, he's evil but, in a sense, it's a recovering evil. You'll get to see what he was like in the beginning; how he's saved and taught to use his skills to fight crime. But, in the process, he also discovers that in order to use his mental powers, he must plumb the depths of all that evil.

"I really didn't have to do much research," he continues in a positive nod to Koepp's script. "All the work has been done by David. I just have to say the words and play what's written. It all just takes care of itself. More often than not I have to come in and make more of what is there. With *The Shadow*, my responsibility is to be as good as what is on the page."

Koepp, for his part, says that *The Shadow* script "meets halfway between the sensibilities of the pulp novels and the radio show.

"Writing this script was actually fairly easy," Koepp recalls of the three years and 15-20 drafts that went into his efforts. "It was difficult in the sense that we wanted to create an overall myth for The Shadow and get into areas that the novels, the radio shows and The Shadow as other than an invisible man."

Mulcahy adds that casting *The Shadow* took time "because it was important to get great actors. They're going to make my job of creating a very rich film that much easier.

"My basic challenge is to create illusions, drama, suspense, humor and many surprises," Mulcahy continues. "*The Shadow* is a myth of great magnitude. Sure, there will be massive sets and special FX, but the big thing will be to breathe life into *The Shadow* mythos and to introduce him to a whole new generation."

Baldwin concludes the proceedings when he attempts to analyze the reason why *The Shadow* has survived long enough in the public consciousness to justify a '90s-style movie interpretation.

"People like the idea of characters who have powers they could easily use for evil or personal gain but don't," Alec Baldwin observes. "People, deep down inside, probably wish somebody like The Shadow would materialize in real life." CS

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# Daredevil

*(continued from page 15)*

character to be out there in a marketplace overrun by hard-edged, nasty guys."

Copying the current wave of revamping old and established characters, Chichester insists, is *not* why they've made changes in *Daredevil*. "We were pretty satisfied with what we were doing," he says, "but we thought there was much more we *could* be doing. There's so much out there! So first Scott started changing the book's look, going with a more graphic look than he had been using."

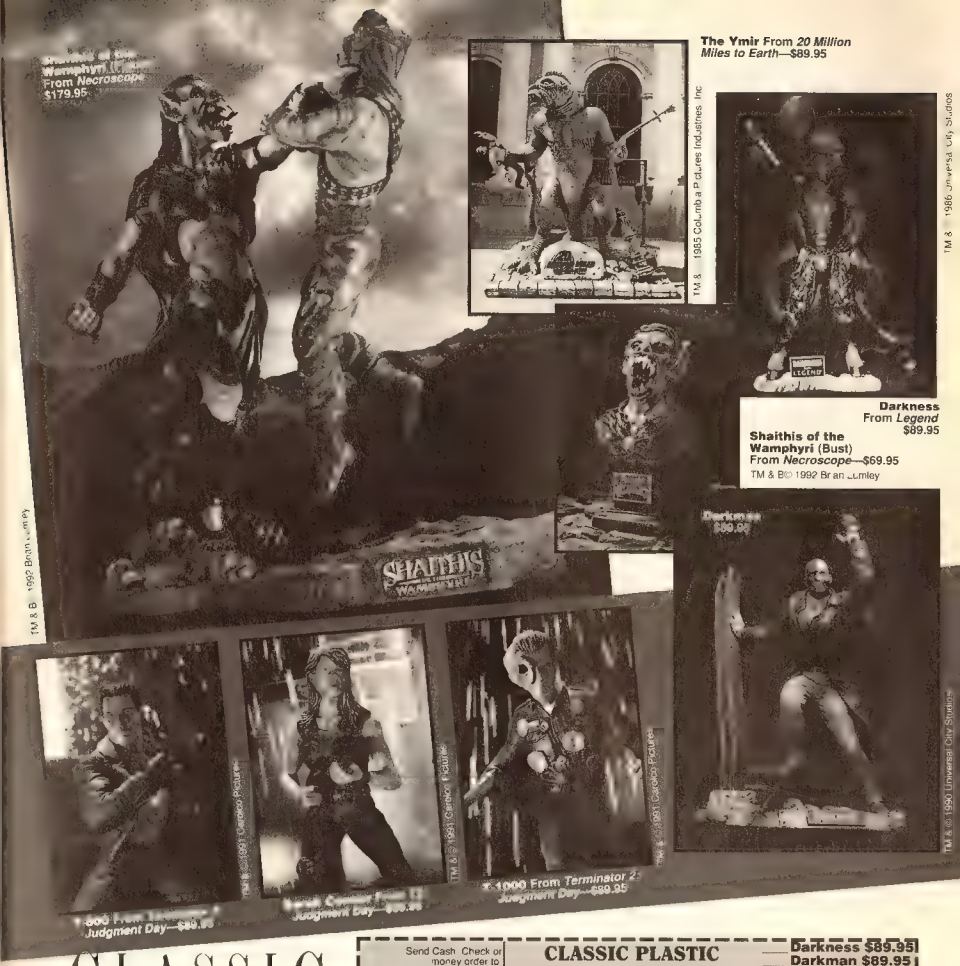
"The new look plays to my strengths as an artist," McDaniel confirms. "When I first got on the book, I was continuing the style that had gone before me, which isn't the way I work best. Now I'm doing stuff that really suits me.

"Dan and I were given the opportunity to shake things up. We pretty much had *carte blanche* to do something completely new. It was time to pump some life into the title, and the first thing you tackle are the visuals. And what's more visual than the costume? People in other books go through costume changes practically every other issue—Daredevil has had this suit almost from the beginning, so it really was time."

"We're keeping the sensibilities that make Daredevil special, but we're doing them in ways that compete with all the over-the-top characters on the racks these days," Chichester adds. "We're not sacrificing anything that makes Daredevil unique; we're pumping him up to be competitive. We liked what we did, but it wasn't catching on. When there are so many big, metallic cyborg/mutant guys, one man doing backflips and using a radar sense gets lost. There aren't any better stories in those heavily armed and ultra-violent characters. In terms of drama, Daredevil competes well."

He admits to some disappointment that fans prefer so many cookie-cutter fighting-machine types. "Sometimes it gets me down, but I understood that going into this book," he says. "If I really wanted to get high profile/high visibility work, I could probably do a couple of fill-in issues on the mutant titles. I would rather work on this book, which has its feet on the ground, and attract people with some dazzling stories backed up by fantastic art. This is Daredevil's 30th anniversary. He's going through some changes, sure, but he's *still* going to be Daredevil—just more exciting, more vivid, more of *everything*.

"I just hope people see it and want to buy it," Dan Chichester says, "because this book is fantastic."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# "THE POWER OF SHAZAM"

## *Can Jerry Ordway revive Captain Marvel, comics' greatest has-been?*

By DARCY SULLIVAN

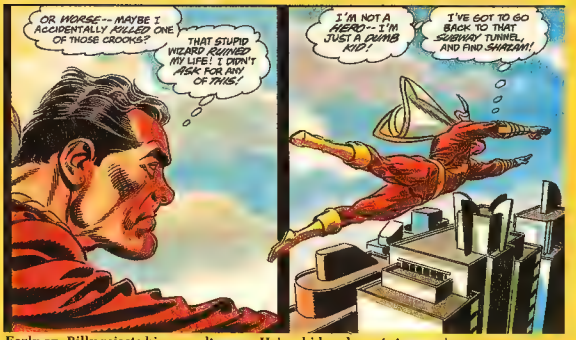
He may have been the most popular superhero of the 1940s, for a while outselling even Superman himself. But make no mistake: Captain Marvel is jinxed.

Following a remarkable 13-year run, this unlucky fellow was sued out of print in 1953. During the next 20 years, two other superheroes took his name, and one of them even trademarked it. His 1973 "comeback" fizzled, and a second try in 1987 was left hanging. Since then, Captain Marvel has joined many a superhero pileup, including *Legends*, *War of the Gods* and *Panic in the Sky*, but he hasn't held a continuing series. To add insult to injury, the poor sap's whole universe—along with most of his extended Marvel Family—was wiped out in DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.

In a sane business, Captain Marvel would have about as much cachet in 1993 as the Andrews Sisters. So why are DC and Jerry Ordway pulling out the stops for a big-ticket Captain Marvel graphic novel, *The Power of Shazam*?

One reason is obvious: If you own the rights to a character whose *Captain Marvel Adventures* once sold around 1.5 million copies twice a month, you don't keep him in the closet. No matter how many times he stumbles.

But there's another reason why "the World's Mightiest Mortal" keeps making the rounds. People *love* this big lug with the squinty eyes, Jay Leno jaw and honest John demeanor. He has come to stand for a kinder, gentler America, a wide-eyed place where maybe a kid *could* become a superhero just by shouting "Shazam!" (which stands for the "Greek gods" Solomon, Hercules, Atlas, Zeus, Achilles and Mercury, from whom Captain Marvel's powers spring).


OR WORSE-- MAYBE I ACCIDENTALLY KILLED ONE OF THOSE CROOKS?
THAT STUPID WIZARD RUINED MY LIFE! I DIDN'T ASK FOR ANY OF THIS!
I'M NOT A HERO-- I'M JUST A DUMB KID!
I'VE GOT TO GO BACK TO THAT SUBWAY TUNNEL, AND FIND SHAZAM!

**Early on, Billy rejects his new alter-ego. He's a kid and wants to remain one.**

In the nasty '90s, readers might not buy this kind of Captain Marvel. Ordway's task as *Power of Shazam* artist and writer is to fashion a Cap that retains his essential niceness but doesn't seem too much of a weenie. And to make today's readers—who find charm aplenty in books like *Bloodseed*, *Bloodshot*, *Bloodstrike* and *Blood Syndicate*—love him.

"Captain Marvel exists in a very special place in many people's hearts," says Ordway. "I want to bring him some of the respect he had before."

Respect" may seem like an odd word for the hero whose nemeses included a worm, whose best pal was a talking tiger in a tacky sports jacket and whose rallying cry was "Holey Moley!" Certainly his chief antagonist, the evil scientist Sivana, wasted no respect on Captain Marvel. Sivana called him "the world's mightiest mistake," and delighted in embarrassing both Captain Marvel and his alter-ego, young Billy Batson. While other foes traded bombastic threats, Marvel and Sivana had exchanges like this:

Captain Marvel: "What are you up to, you little weasel?"

Sivana: "None of your business, you big red cheese!"

Marvel's 1940s adventures in Fawcett's *Whiz Comics*, *Captain Marvel Adventures* and other books, principally drawn by C.C. Beck and written by Bill Parker and science-fiction author Otto Binder, could be warm, goofy and stirring all at the same time. Ditto for the Marvel Family, including Mary Marvel and Captain Marvel Jr., and the extended clan, including Lieutenant Marvel, Uncle Marvel, Freckles Marvel, Baby Marvel and Hoppy the Captain Marvel Bunny.

It was a different age, yes, but even then the Marvels were something special. Kid sidekicks were abundant, but Billy Batson *was* Captain Marvel, holding out the promise that you too could be a superguy if you could only find your magic word. Beck and the other artists were among the industry's best.

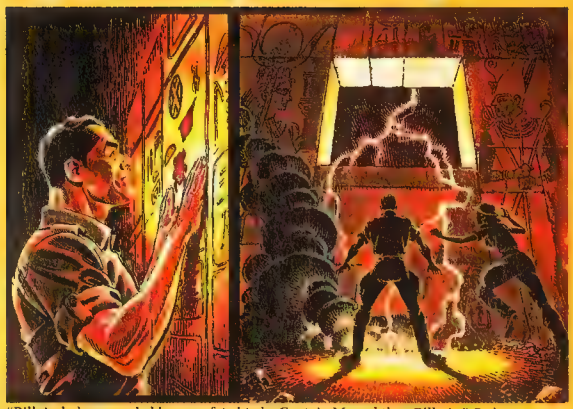
Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

**The World's Mightiest Mortal has had his share of failures and success, but now's his time to be reinstated in the DC Universe.**

**Young Billy Batson is taken for the ride of his life by a mysterious stranger. He's led underground and into a certain cavern.**

Binder's scripts were creative, playful and sometimes downright odd. Some took this as parody—"I had the vague feeling that Captain Marvel was making fun of me," wrote cartoonist Jules Feiffer.

Marvels big and small dominated Fawcett's comics line from 1940, the year Captain Marvel was born, until 1953, the year Cap's dirt nap began. Who took out the World's Mightiest



**"Billy's dad was probably more fated to be Captain Marvel than Billy is," Ordway says.**

Mortal? Was it Mr. Mind, the Nazi-coddling worm behind the Monster Society of Evil? Oggar, god of magic? Ibac, who got his own acronymic powers from Ivan the Terrible, Borgia, Attila the Hun and Caligula?

Nope, it was DC, whose initials stood for Dire Consequences if the company thought you were ripping off Superman. In 1941, DC launched a lawsuit claiming that Captain Marvel infringed on the Man of Steel's trademark: both flew, both had news reporter alter-egos, Lex Luthor and Sivana were both bald scientists, etc. Fawcett fought back, citing things like the magical side to Captain Marvel's transformation and its "basis" in Greek mythology. (For the record, Solomon was not a Greek god but a mortal Biblical king, Hercules and Achilles were demigods, Atlas was a Titan, and both Mercury and Hercules are Roman names.)

And then, with superhero sales waning in the early 1950s, Fawcett stopped fighting back. The Captain Marvel books were cancelled, the lawsuit was settled. For some fans, an age and a certain innocence faded away.

Jerry Ordway, just 35, is way too young to remember the Golden Age of Captain Marvel. His first memories of Captain Marvel date back to 1973, when DC brought out *Shazam!* Here's where the story gets strange: DC bought the rights to Captain Marvel and gave him his own comic (called *Shazam!* because Marvel Comics now had a legal lock on the series title *Captain Marvel*). Familiar friends and foes were there to celebrate: Beck was brought back to draw the series, and "introducing" the good captain on the cover of #1 was Superman himself!

"I remember liking the reprints they ran better than the new stories," says Ordway, and he wasn't the only one. Beck quickly walked off the book, saying the writers just didn't get it. They had Captain Marvel "flying around making all kinds of wisecracks and blundering into one silly situation after another," Beck wrote in *The Comics Journal* before his death in 1989. "Instead of being the World's Mightiest Mortal, Captain Marvel was the World's Biggest Clown."

Twenty years on, Ordway is determined to retain Marvel's lightheartedness without making him ludicrous. "I don't want to violate the character," he says. "He's like Superman in the first movie—corny, but not a dufus."

"Captain Marvel was the polar opposite of today's moody, violent heroes," says Jonathan Peterson, a former editor at DC who developed the current book with Ordway. "When we started working on *The Power of Shazam*, we would laugh out loud at the covers of some of the old books. They had such charm."

*The Power of Shazam* features Ordway's "centrist" Captain Marvel, an unexpected prologue, an Art Deco ambiance and the adventurous spirit of the 1941 Republic movie serial *The Adventures of Captain Marvel*. The serial, which film buff Peterson showed him, helped spark Ordway's interest in the project, which was offered to him in 1991 after John Byrne abandoned it.

"That serial's a lot of fun," Ordway says. "I had always heard how Captain Marvel throws a guy off a building. That's funny in a movie way, but it's certainly not the comics character."

All Art: Jerry Ordway

**If this scene looks familiar, it should; it's a re-creation of the cover to *Whiz Comics* #2.**

Look for a salute to the serial in the graphic novel, when Captain Marvel stops two crooks from escaping in an elevator by yanking up the cable. Other homages pop up throughout. "During Captain Marvel's first real outing, he throws a car to stop these crooks, and it's clearly the cover to *Whiz Comics* #1," says Peterson. (Incidentally, the first issue of *Whiz Comics* was numbered #2!)

"I'm a firm believer in making do with what's there," says Ordway. "Jonathan and I decided to add a lot of stories back into continuity. The only thing we were willing to leave out was the mini-series, which wrote off a lot of stories that people liked."

That 1987 mini-series, written by Roy and Dann Thomas, set Billy Batson in modern-day San Francisco and put Batson's street-kid slang into Captain Marvel's mouth. *Shazam! The New Beginning* lasted four issues and was supposed to spawn a regular series, according to Roy Thomas. The fact that it didn't still annoys him; he says his contractual option on the character lapsed while DC fumbled about, getting various artists to work up versions of his plot. Thomas declines to discuss DC's handling of the character, saying, "It's nothing against Jerry, whose work I admire very much, but I think I should have been doing Captain Marvel instead of anyone else."

## The Other Captain Marvels

Judging from Captain Marvel's last 40 years, you really *can* keep a good hero down. Not his name, though. Two other Captain Marvels surfaced while the original was gone (and the trademark on the name lapsed). Oddly enough, the curse hit them, too.

The first and most notorious namesake debuted in 1966, and had perhaps the most disturbing superpower ever. M.F. Enterprises presented a Captain Marvel whose body flew into pieces whenever he yelled "Split!" Marvel Comics itself sued for trademark infringement this time.

Marvel quickly trotted out its own Captain Marvel: Mar-Vell, a legitimate captain in the Kree army. He bore no resemblance to the original—until sales slumped. With *Captain Marvel* #17, Roy Thomas and Gil Kane gave the hero a new costume and a new but familiar "origin"—boy (in this case, Captain America and Hulk sidekick Rick Jones) lured to foreboding spot by ominous specter. Jones found he could "become" Captain Marvel by clanging his wristbands together—the two traded places in the Negative Zone that way. "We didn't have anything as good as the word 'Shazam,' " Thomas says, "but nothing *is* as good as that particular phrase."

After a fairly healthy run, the Captain Marvel luck ran true to form and Marvel's captain died of cancer in a 1982 graphic novel. At least the lawyers didn't get him.

Marvel's unwillingness to relinquish the name led to a second Kree Captain Marvel, a female version who joined the Avengers. She's still alive—but when someone says "Captain Marvel," who thinks of her?

—*Darcy Sullivan*

It does seem odd that DC would plan another Captain Marvel kick-start in 1991, just four years after their last one. Says Peterson, "We told DC, 'We're gonna re-create the Captain Marvel universe from day one. We're *not* going to bastardize the tradition, but we're going to bring it into the '90s. And you're going to be locked into this version for several years—you're going to have to live with it.' And DC said, 'OK.' "

Ironically, while Ordway says he chose to ignore Thomas' version, both men interweave the villainous Black Adam's origin with Captain Marvel's, and both take a rather grim look at Batson's life as a homeless urchin. Perhaps most significantly, both Thomas and Ordway resolve one of the paradoxes of the original Billy Batson/Captain Marvel relationship: Are they the same person, or aren't they?

In Thomas' story, they most definitely are, and Captain Marvel is said to look like Billy's dad. Ordway expands on this—when you see Clarence Charles Batson, you can't help but think, "That's Captain Marvel!"

The resemblance lends an eerie feeling to the prologue, a 21-page scene in which "C.C." Batson, his wife Lyn and Adam invade the Egyptian tomb of Ramses II, under the employ of one Thaddeus Sivana. In the tomb, they find a mysterious scarab necklace and a reference to the wizard Shazam. Adam steals the necklace, kills the Batsons and abducts their daughter Mary, but not before Lyn surreptitiously stuffs part of the necklace into a familiar-looking tiger doll.

Cut to Fawcett City, where a ghostly stranger leads orphan Billy Batson into an abandoned subway tunnel to meet the ancient wizard Shazam. Simply by saying his name, Batson inherits the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Hercules, the stamina of Atlas, the power of Zeus, the courage of Achilles and the speed of Mercury. Except in this version, Billy doesn't want them.

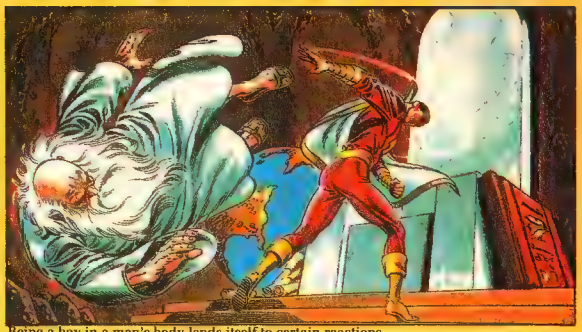
**"I'm a firm believer in making do with what's there," Ordway explains. Everything you see in *The Power of Shazam* was there all along.**

"At first, all he knows is that Shazam has made him old," says Ordway. "And when you're a kid, you want to be a kid."

Still, Shazam hooks Billy with the idea of solving his parents' murder, using his newfound powers. Billy/Captain Marvel ultimately confronts his parents' killer, whom the scarab's magic has transformed into Black Adam, a rampaging dark Marvel. (It's probably better not to ask how the Egyptians ended up doling out the powers of primarily Greek entities.)

Sivana's part in all this? He had Adam plunder the tomb to decorate the Fawcett City World's Fair, and spends the rest of the graphic novel watching his machinations self-destruct. "People will say, 'Jerry's doing the Lex-Luthor-as-businessman riff,' but Sivana is totally broken in this book," Ordway says. "I'm setting him up to come back as a mad scientist. He's not a killer, though. I've taken him one step away from the actual murder of Billy's parents—*but that doesn't mean he's not a bad guy!*"

The novel's end, Ordway promises, reveals secrets about Captain Marvel and Billy Batson and their strange symbiosis, secrets that wouldn't be secret if he blabbed them out now. "Billy's dad plays a pivotal role in the story," hints Peterson. "Jerry has come up with a brilliant twist on the myth that has never been done before." Ordway himself suggests that "Billy's dad was probably more fated to be Captain Marvel than Billy is."



Being a boy in a man's body lends itself to certain reactions.

Ordway will reveal that his graphic novel ends with Billy searching for his sister Mary, "trying to get a sense of family back." Rather fitting for a guy once tailed by an entire Marvel Family.

To readers, the most magical part of *The Power of Shazam* will doubtless be the first thrilling time that Billy shouts "Shazam!" DC staffers will probably faint just to see Ordway finally deliver the darn thing. To put it bluntly, what took so long?

Ordway slides away from the word "late" even as he admits that the original deadline was February 1992—it's now scheduled for a January 1994 release. "This was kind of a side project," says Ordway, who had to help kill Superman and bring him back between fall 1991 and now. Along the way, he and Al Gordon turned out the four-issue *Wildstar* for Image (CS #31).

"I did *Wildstar* in part to bring myself back into the limelight," Ordway admits. "As one of Superman's writers, my profile among the kids who buy comics was pretty low. It should help *Shazam* now that I'm a 'hot Image artist.' " That's the end of the *Wildstar/Shazam* connection, he promises—"Captain Marvel won't be ripping Sivana's scalp off."

Painting *Shazam* also took longer than Ordway anticipated, but the delay may have worked out well. "When I started, I had a hard time convincing DC to do *The Power of Shazam* as a painted hardcover book," he says. Fully painted artwork is much more expensive to reproduce than standard "four-color" comics, and in 1991 DC wasn't as confident that its hardcover books would sell as it is today, Ordway says.

The artist set out to wow DC's bigwigs with his painted work. He visualized the book as a film, giving certain scenes color themes—warm gold for the Egyptian sequence, cool urban blue for Fawcett City. He started with 10"x15" layouts on tracing paper, transferred them to the art board via a lightbox, and did the black linework directly on the art boards. "That way there were no pencils to erase, which ruins the ability of the paper to absorb color," he says.

He then painted the pages with concentrated watercolors, at a rate of about two pages a day. As an intermediate step, he photocopied the line art, so that DC can possibly issue a European version later, applying the

*(continued on page 62)*

Black Adam's origin is intertwined with Captain Marvel's: He killed the Balsons, forcing Billy to take to the streets.

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# NOT JUST ANOTHER NINJA

## *When Bruce Lee, James Bond & Bruce Wayne meet, it's Ninjak time.*

According to *Ninjak* writer Mark Morettf, Valiant Comics' newest star is a cross between James Bond and Bruce Lee.

Moretti is very excited about the exotic lead character, who's now starring in his own monthly title. *Ninjak* was developed by several Valiant editors and writers, along with the hot art team of Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti.

"We did a lot of ground work to get it up and running, including his appearances in *Bloodshot* and *Secret Weapons*," says Moretti. "The character was really put together by all of us—starting at the top, there was Steve Massarsky, Bob Layton, Jon Hartz, Kevin VanHook, the artwork and inspiration by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. As an artist, Joe does more than just interpret the plot and draw the pictures—he's very knowledgeable and has a great sense of design. The look of this book is going to be completely different from anything Valiant has done before, and probably different from anything else on the market now.

"The character himself is based on the Bond movies in a way, mixed with Bruce Lee and the adventure elements of movies like *Die Hard* or *The Hunt for Red October*."

Ninjak went almost unnoticed in his first appearances in *Bloodshot* #6 & #7, but Moretti says every comics fan will know about the hero by the time his regular series is underway. "Ninjak's alter-ego is Colin King," he says. "Initially, no one else in the series will know that, because he's

**"As far as Ninjak himself goes, I think you're going to see something that will step off the page and have a real toughness to it," says Mark Moretti.**

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

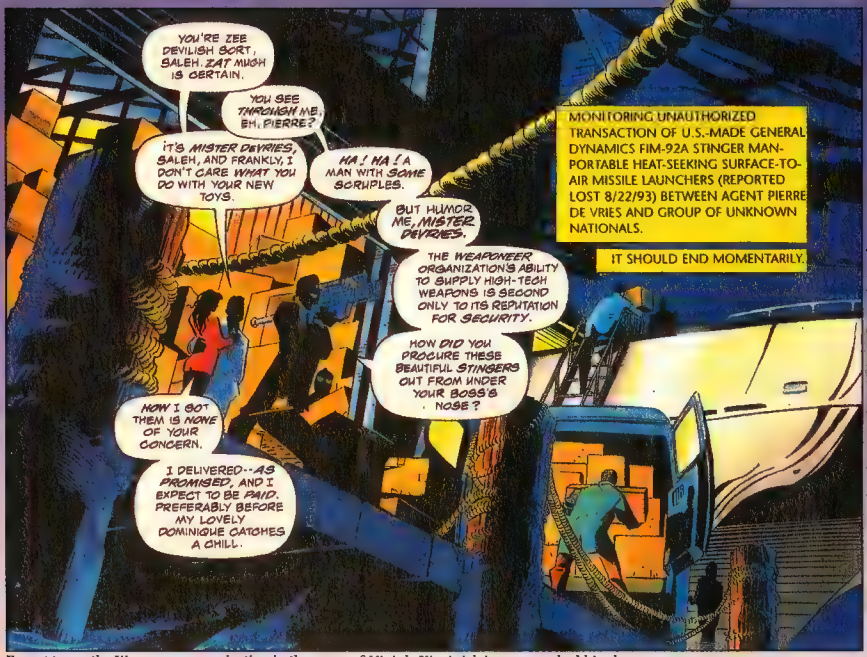
very secretive about his identity. Colin King is a billionaire, a computer genius. He's British by birth and was raised abroad. His father was in the military and died mysteriously, while stationed in Japan. We're going to be visiting many of those themes throughout the first year of *Ninjak* as the character develops.

"His hobby is botany. While he was in Japan as a young boy, he was exposed to their culture, and he appreciates the Earth's natural beauty more than high technology, though he's well-versed in both. Colin King is almost an international playboy—he's 'involved' with many of the world's most glamorous, wealthy women. Like James Bond, he's almost irresistible to them. He's dashing and debonair. When he goes to work as Ninjak, though, he really changes his persona. It's not quite like the foppish Bruce Wayne turning into Batman.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR THIS, LOVER?
I MUST HAVE SLIPPED OFF IN THE HALLWAY. I FOUND IT WHEN I GOT OFF THE LIFT
IN UNANNOUNCED, DOMINIQUE, BUT YOU LEFT THE FRONT DOOR SLIGHTLY AJAR...
I WAS FEARING FOUL PLAY.

"He's dashing and debonair," explains Moretti. "Colin King is almost an international playboy."

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon


YOU'RE ZEE DEVILISH SORT, SALEH. I AT MUCH IS CERTAIN.
YOU SEE THROUGH ME, EH, PIERRE?
IT'S MISTER DEVRIES, SALEH, AND FRANKLY, I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO WITH YOUR NEW TOYS.
HA! HA! A MAN WITH SOME SCRUPLES.
BUT HUMOR ME, MISTER DEVRIES.
MONITORING UNAUTHORIZED TRANSACTION OF U.S.-MADE GENERAL DYNAMICS FIM-92A STINGER MAN-PORTABLE HEAT-SEEKING SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE LAUNCHERS (REPORTED LOST 8/22/93) BETWEEN AGENT PIERRE DE VRIES AND GROUP OF UNKNOWN NATIONALS.
IT SHOULD END MOMENTARILY.
THE WEAPONEER ORGANIZATION'S ABILITY TO SUPPLY HIGH-TECH WEAPONS IS SECOND ONLY TO ITS REPUTATION FOR SECURITY.
HOW DID YOU PROCURE THESE BEAUTIFUL STINGERS OUT FROM UNDER YOUR BOSS'S NOSE?
HOW I GOT THEM IS NONE OF YOUR CONCERN.
I DELIVERED--AS PROMISED, AND I EXPECT TO BE PAID. PREFERABLY BEFORE MY LOVELY DOMINIQUE CATCHES A CHILL.
All Ninjak Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1993 Voyager Communications Inc.

**Expect to see the Weaponeer organization in the pages of *Ninjak*. King's job is as a masked hired gun.**

Colin King comes across as a sturdy, athletic guy, but when he turns into Ninjak, his darker side emerges. He has all that training from his years in Japan."

Moretti says the true motivation of Colin King will eventually be revealed in a special *Ninjak* #0. "He'll be going back to Japan in issue #3, but all of the details concerning *how* he became Ninjak are going to be revealed slowly, like an old *film noir* murder mystery. We'll finally find out in *Ninjak* #0 what actually happened to him, but that'll definitely be a year down the road."

Despite his appearance, Ninjak doesn't actually possess any superhuman abilities. "He's an Olympic-class athlete with a self-awareness that borders on ESP. He's completely confident and well-trained in everything that has to do with martial arts and mysticism—it's almost as if he has a sixth sense. That's his strength. It's what allows him to out-think his opponent, to always be ready for any situation, and turn it to his advantage," Moretti says.

Ninjak's introduction to readers was through the Weaponeer organization, where he served as a hired gun, but as Moretti points out, his ongoing monthly exploits will also see him allied with British Intelligence.

"As his adventures unfold, we're going to be introduced to the WebNet organization, a worldwide crime syndicate with a tremendous presence as far as illegal operations in every major industry. They also have phony fronts within these industries that make them appear legitimate," he says. "WebNet is run by Dr. Silk, who's introduced in *Ninjak* #1. Without giving too much away, I can say that he is part of the reason that Ninjak *became* Ninjak. Dr. Silk is a cross between Stephen Hawking and Ernst Blofeld, the most *evil* James Bond villain."

According to Moretti, Ninjak fits easily into the Valiant Universe. "Most of our characters aren't guys who fly around with capes and have beams coming out of their eyes," he says. "He really is more of a throwback to the early days of comics, where he has to use his brain and guile. He does fit in fairly well with Neville Alcott's British Intelligence organization, with Bloodshot, and with the Eternal Warrior, who also works through the same organization. Ninjak is to secret agents what Michael Jordan is to basketball."

The series kicks off with a two-part story in *Ninjak* #1 and #2 called "Black Water." Moretti reveals that the first six months of the series lead up to a confrontation that solidly establishes him in the Valiant Universe.

" 'Black Water' involves WebNet and Dr. Silk, but I don't want to give away what it's about," he says. "In the third issue, he returns to Japan after he joins Neville Alcott's British Intelligence organization. Issue #4 will also take place in Japan, though it isn't continued from the previous month. In issues #5 and #6, he integrates with other characters in the Valiant Universe when X-O guest stars. It'll be a guy with the armor that has all the power in the universe versus a guy with virtually no super-powers, who uses his brain to get out of almost any situation. It'll be interesting to see how each one functions—one by his wits and the other by his brawn."

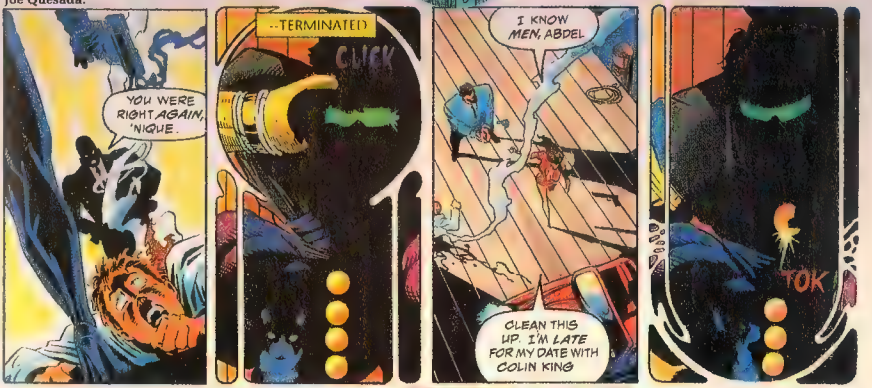
During a year where every new title is alleged to be "new and different," Moretti says *Ninjak* actually lives up to the hype. "It's the thing that Joe Quesada has always talked about, and the reason why I'm writing the book. Bob Layton and Joe both like the approach that I take in the books I write. If you go back to the

**This intricate Ninjak poster was specially designed for the Valiant Vision process. It looks great as is, but special glasses give it a funky 3-D effect.**

early Bond movies or the Bruce Lee films, they really have a strong edge to them. It's hard for me to describe without sounding self-serving, but if anyone were to read the *Eternal Warrior* books that I've written, I think they would see a really strong edge to them. They're tougher, leaner and heavier on action and dialogue than you'll see in most comics. As far as Ninjak himself goes, I think you're going to see something that will step off the page and have a real toughness to it—*not* the standard superhero fare about a guy who's always doing good deeds. Ninjak has a real edge to him. He'll do anything to get the job done."

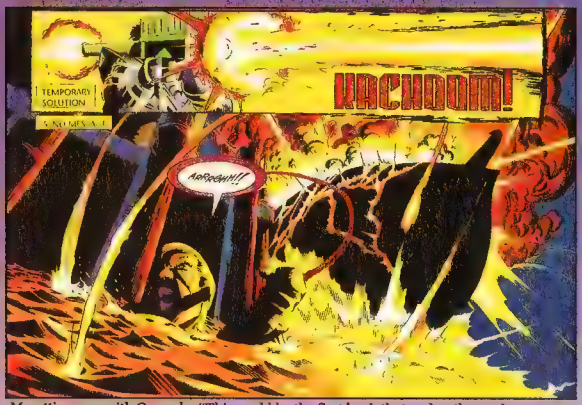
Moretti's friendship with both penciller Joe Quesada and inker Jimmy Palmiotti makes their collaboration on *Ninjak* easier. "I can just tell him what I'm looking for as far as action sequences. I'll literally write, 'Joe, in this area you can run with it. If you want any suggestions for weapons or anything, let me know.' "

**"Ninjak really has the look of a ninja, with stealth and grace and beauty to him," notes Joe Quesada.**




All Art Joe Quesada/Jimmy Palmiotti

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, EH, MOSLEH?
;HUMPH; I AGREE WITH PIERRE--SHE IS A BITCH!
HEH! HEH! YES, AND IT'LL BE INTERESTING TO SEE HOW MUCH SHE SOAKS THAT PLAYBOY KING FOR.
FIP!
CONTINUING INVESTIGATION




**Moretti agrees with Quesada, "This could be the first book that makes the reader spontaneously combust."**

When Quesada was reading the monthly Valiant titles, he was struck by Moretti's work on *Eternal Warrior*. "I loved Barry Windsor-Smith's work on the series, but when this new guy took over, he brought a very cinematic quality to its pace and storytelling," says Quesada. "His writing is top-notch. To me, it has the same feel as Frank Miller's writing. I asked to be introduced to Mark, and told everybody I wanted to work with him. Bob Layton was originally supposed to script *Ninjak*, but when he became too busy, I asked for Mark."

As with most partnerships, each collaborator contributes his own strengths to *Ninjak*. "Mark brings a *film noir* feel to it, and I bring a *Batman* flavor. When I was designing the character, I had toys and licensing and millions of dollars on my mind," jokes Quesada. "Actually, *Ninjak* is based more in the real world; it was originally described to me as 'James Bond meets Bruce Lee meets Bruce Wayne.' I wanted to retain the character's ninja aspect, so I revamped the traditional ninja costume. Bob Layton told me he couldn't have a cape, he had to be stealthy and built for mobility. I wanted him to look cool. I wanted a fan to be able to dress like Ninjak for Halloween. The costume I designed for *The Ray* was always one of my favorites, and Ninjak is a take on that idea."

In designing the title's unique look, Quesada went outside the traditional comics scene to combine Art Deco and Art Nouveau. "I always had an affection for Art Nouveau, and wanted to use many of those elements," says Quesada. "The differences between Art Nouveau and Art Deco may be subtle to the average person, but they're actually radically different. I wanted to use naturalistic, organic Art Nouveau elements for Ninjak, and the more mechanical Art Deco elements for the villainous Dr. Silk.

"Ninjak's not someone with a cape, or someone who looks like he would be setting off metal detectors! He really has the look of a ninja, with stealth and grace and beauty to him. At the same time, he has a real deadly look, almost like a black panther stalking his prey. He's very lightweight from the waist down, which will make him very quick and mobile. The upper body, where he has his tunic and things on his arms, allows him to carry his gadgets concealed, but always at the ready. He can pull something out in an instant if he needs it, yet he's not encumbered with bulky boots or leg gear. He's lean, lithe and quick, and able to move very freely that way."

A longtime Bond fan, Moretti admits that the primary influences on his writing are cinematic. In recent years, he has grown fond of the action-adventures directed by John McTiernan and James Cameron.

"The thing that stands out in my mind is one night when Bob Layton and I went to see *The Fugitive*, which I thought was terrific. Halfway through the movie, he leaned over to me and said, 'This is just like something you could write!' I thought that was the biggest compliment I could get! I can't say I'm in that ballpark, but that's the flavor I try to bring to my work."

Prior to comics (Moretti's first comics work was *Magnus* #7), he worked in a variety of jobs, of which the most important to Moretti was coaching sports teams, particularly basketball. "It taught a great many things, such as teamwork and working with other people," he says. "In comics, you're up against the pressure of coming up with ideas on a monthly basis. But in sports, you're up against the clock. Your goal is to meet those deadlines in comics, and meet those deadlines on the basketball court. Every factor is against you in basketball, from your opponents to the referees, and you have factors against you in comics. Everybody must work together to meet the common goal the same way, and everyone has to work like a team to get everything published on time."

Comics fans have been anticipating the coming of *Ninjak* for months, and Mark Moretti promises it will be a very hot title. "Joe Quesada said it best: This could be the first book that makes the reader spontaneously combust," he laughs. "If they pick up *Ninjak*, read it and are not excited by it, there's definitely something not quite working! It's so hot, we had to put a metal cover on it! This way, once the readers explode, someone else can wipe the cover off and read it again. *Ninjak* really is going to be the hottest thing that anybody has seen in a long, long time."

**The "Black Water" story arc runs through issues #1 and #2, involving WebNet and the villainous Dr. Silk.**

Art: Andrew Wendel

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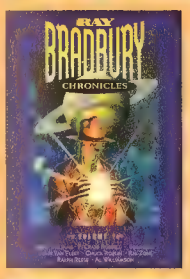


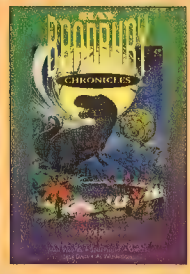


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# GRIMMER GOTHAM

## *It's a Dark Knight for the silver screen.*

By BOB MILLER

Gotham City has a new caped crusader: Phantasm. Like Batman, he uses similar methods for fighting criminals—not to capture them for the law, but to *execute* them. Some members of the police think that Batman has turned rogue; likewise, Gotham's gangsters believe Batman has gone psychotic and is murdering them one by one. Terrified crime bosses go to the Joker for protection. As Batman is drawn into a climactic battle with Phantasm and the Joker, he confronts the tragedies of his past and the dramatic origin of Gotham's Dark Knight.

Thus, the stage is set for *Batman: Mask of Phantasm*?

According to producer and co-writer Paul Dini, "There's a level of action in the movie that we don't do in the TV show. It's more of a serious play-for-keeps tone that adults and teenagers will be attracted to. If you like the darker comics and graphic novels, this is definitely up your alley."

Once again, Kevin Conroy voices the dual role of Batman/Bruce Wayne (see page 36), with Efrem Zimbalist Jr. reprising Alfred the Butler, Bob Hastings as Commissioner James Gordon and Mark Hamill as the Joker. Dana Delany stars as Andrea Beaumont, Bruce Wayne's love interest; Stacy Keach Jr. is her father, Carl; Abe Vigoda plays crime boss Salvatore Valestra. Hart Bochner voices Councilman Arthur Reeves. And veteran character actor Dick Miller plays Chuckie Sol.

Robin will not make an appearance, Dini says, because "this is Bruce's story. It's more of him coming to terms with his past and what he has become in the present."

In producing the movie, sections were assigned to different writers, Dini

explains. "Alan Burnett wrote the overall story. He also wrote the very beginning and very end. He set up the plot, Marty Pasko set up some of the flashback segments and I wrote most of the middle, which deals with the Joker. I also did some of the flashbacks and the heavy romance stuff. Michael Reaves rounded it out by adding the finale and other flashback elements.

"It was also parceled out among the [animated series'] directors: Boyd Kirkland, Frank Paur, Kevin Altieri and Dan Riba. We all knew what the story was overall, but each concentrated on the areas where we knew our strengths were. As I carved out the Joker as my personal niche, I wrote most of the scenes with him.

"Alan Burnett made the observation after seeing the Leica reel that it looked like a very good graphic novel, blown up and put on the screen. It has a big story that's very important to Batman and all the characters intimate to his world, and it has many repercussions in his life."

More time and money for the feature allowed the crew to create a spectacular Gotham City with a computer.

Originally, the movie was a made-for-home-video project, *Mask of the Phantasm*. Why did Warner Bros. decide on a big-screen release?

"I think it was because the show was such a hit and there seems to be a bigger audience for a movie rather than a made-for-video," Dini says. "It will ultimately show up as a video release, but the Warner Bros. feature executives read the script and saw the art and liked it very much. Also, Warners has been looking to get into the animated feature film business. So, they decided, 'Well, let's spend a little more time and money on it [the *Batman* video], make it a theatrical release and see how it does.' "

The bigger budget has enabled the *Batman* crew to utilize computer generated effects, particularly in the opening title sequence.

"A computer visual artist named Alan Brown came up with this wonderful program that creates Gotham City inside the computer, which gives you a 3-D rendering. We can swing through the city like a moving camera, go around a building and up and down. It's an incredible effect. We'll be using that throughout the movie, and possibly in upcoming episodes."

In pitching for the *Batman* video-turned-movie, Dini and producer Bruce Timm created a story which will instead be done as a second-season episode. "Trial" involves virtually all of Batman's Rogues' Gallery and Janet Van Dorn, Gotham City's new district attorney (Shelley Hack, from *Charlie's Angels*). She replaces Harvey Dent, who has, of course, become the notorious Two-Face.

Dini describes Van Dorn as "a strict, by-the-book law-and-order type who doesn't see any particular reason why Gotham needs Batman. She's disdainful of Gordon because he seems to rely on Batman as some sort of magic drug that will cure the city's evils, and she's frustrated because he gums up the legal process for her. She feels that if there was no Batman, there would be no Joker, Riddler, Two-Face, Clayface or any of these guys haunting the city. But, she [later] realizes Batman didn't create these guys; they created him."

Robin will be seen more often in the second season, because the Fox network believes he's one of *Batman*'s star attractions. "He's very popular with kids," the producer says. "Many people like the fantasy of 'Wouldn't it be cool to be Batman's sidekick?'

Having "carved out the Joker as my personal niche," Paul Dini took on most of the Clown Prince's big screen scenes.

## Killer in Mothballs

In the animated series' second season, Batman faces such returning fan favorites as Catwoman, Ra's al Ghul and the Joker. But there's still one beloved bad guy missing from the line-up.

Namely, Killer Moth.

"What *is* it about Killer Moth?!" exclaims series producer Paul Dini. "Why Killer Moth? I have to ask you people—all you fans out there—I love you for loving our show, but *what is the deal with Killer Moth*? HE'S DRESSED LIKE A *BUG*, for God's sake! He has one of the ugliest costumes in creation. Green with orange stripes. OK, I know they re-invented him; *Legends of the Dark Knight* was pretty good. But, come on—Killer Moth? Just one punch. Batman hits him—BAM—he goes down. Killer Moth couldn't—couldn't whip *Leslie Thompkins* in an arm wrestling match. Get real! What do you want next, *Bat-Mite*?!?"

Dini calms down. He *has* read the mail and knows that, despite everything, fans *like* that garishly clad moth man. "The thing about Killer Moth is—and actually, some fans have written in, sending in their own ideas for Killer Moth stories. It's just that what makes a good villain for us is somebody whose motivations come out of an emotion."

He points to Mr. Freeze, antagonist of his Emmy-winning "Heart of Ice," as an example: "There was a very strong emotional hook I felt with Mr. Freeze, with the idea of an emotionless man—a man who is so cold, emotionally and physically, that *all* human caring was frozen out. Now what's great with a character like that, is that supposedly you can make him human again, and that's terrific, 'cause all his motivation comes from emotion. Mr. Freeze seems stiff and unyielding, and bitter and cold, but within, he's probably the most emotional character.

Killer Moth Art: Tom Mandrake/Copyright 1992 DC Comics Inc.

**"I would consider doing Killer Moth if we could get Dan Aykroyd for the voice," Paul Dini notes, "and have him running around yelling, 'I'm a bug, I'm a bug!' "**

"The Mad Hatter is another character we sort of re-invented for our series," Dini says. "The idea of the Mad Hatter came out of his penchant for collecting hats, but more came from this question of a guy who's searching for *respect*, for self-respect and for respect from other people. Here was somebody who knew he was funny-looking and who believed that everybody laughed at him because of his looks.

"He couldn't trust himself to make friends any other way, rather than just controlling other people's minds. And also, he had been rejected by a woman he had a crush on, and—as I think everybody has—fantasized that, 'Well, if I could just change that person's mind about me.' So, Jarvis Tetch goes out and does that, and he's successful, but at the end, of course, he loses because it was never meant to happen and you can't will that into happening. That's what undoes him at the end. And that makes him sad and makes the ending kind of touching. And I think that *every* villain has that in him.

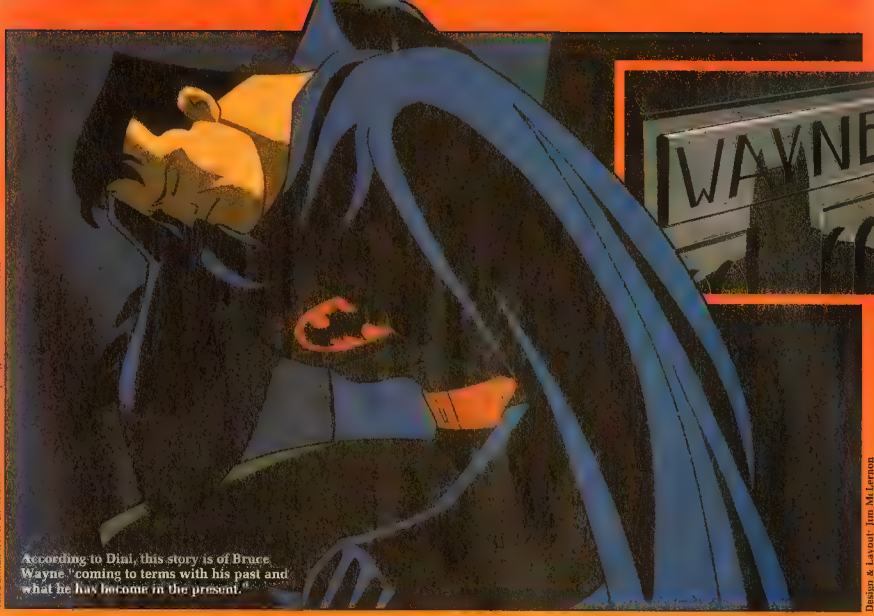
"With Killer Moth, it's not that we just hate him for no reason," Dini explains, "it's just that we were never able to find anything that was particularly powerful for him in that regard. Ultimately, it came down to—we looked at what was there, and there was nothing much powering the character, so sorry, all you Killer Moth fans. Maybe we'll stick him in someplace; maybe we'll find a place for him, but right now, we just don't think he can carry a show."

*—Bob Miller*

The "level of action" in *Mask of the Phantasm* "is more of a serious play-for-keeps tone" says Dini.

"We met with Fox early on and they said they would like to see more Robin in the show. However, if really terrific stories came up where Robin was just dead weight, we shouldn't use him."

Twenty new episodes have been produced for the second season, in addition to the five stories held over from last season (which aired in September). New stories involve a turning point in the relationship between Batman and Catwoman; an adaptation of the recent *Detective Comics* story, "A Bullet for Bullock"; Batman teaming up with Harley Quinn to stop the Joker from nuking Gotham; a battle between Batman and his nemesis from the comics' "Knightfall" storyline, Bane (Henry Silva); the return of Mr. Freeze; and a mystery that involves Ra's al Ghul and Old West bounty hunter Jonah Hex (Lance Henriksen), scripted by *Jonah Hex: Two-Gun Mojo* comics writer Joe R. Lansdale. These episodes are scheduled to air in May (some possibly in February) for the ratings




According to Dini, this story is of Bruce Wayne "coming to terms with his past and what he has become in the present."

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Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

sweeps. Also, the delay gives the producers time to polish the episodes.

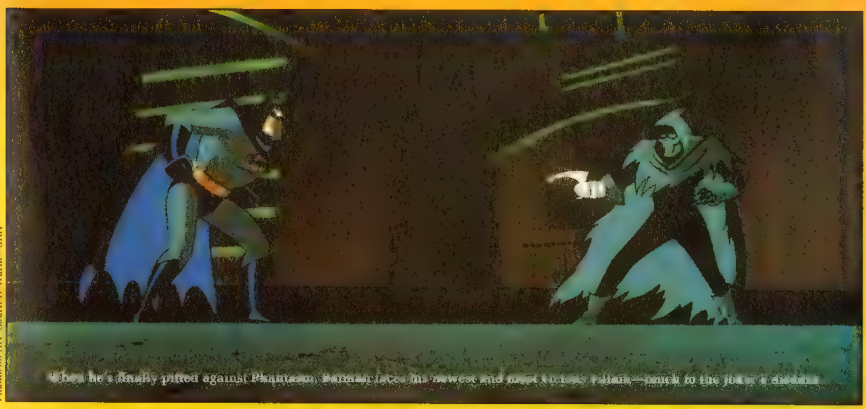
After the first season, producer Alan Burnett (CS #29) left the series to work on other Warner projects. Dini was promoted from story editor to producer "to fill his very large shoes around the office."

Recently, *Batman: The Animated Series* won a daytime Emmy for Best Writing in an Animated Series (Pasko, Reaves, Dini, Sean Catherine Derek), represented by Dini's episode, "Heart of Ice." This marks Dini's third Emmy.

Meanwhile, Dini and Bruce Timm are collaborating on special *Batman* comics done in the show's style. The first is a 64-page *Batman Adventures* special, to coincide (but not as a tie-in) with the movie's Christmas opening.

"It's a story that we could never tell on the show," Paul Dini reveals. "It's a *little* too sexy and a *little* too violent for the series, but it's a story that's dear to our hearts. It's called 'Mad Love.' It's the origin of Harley Quinn, and it explains who she is, where she came from and why she's infatuated with the Joker.

"For next year, we're plotting a *Harley & Ivy* three- or four-issue mini-series. That'll probably come out sometime next summer. It's going to be really funny and very strange, and it's going to be great. We love those crazy girls."

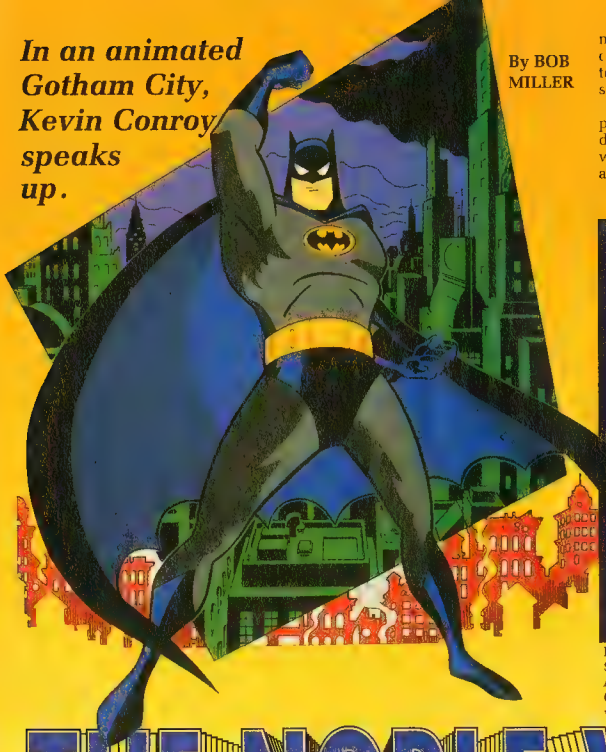


When he's finally pitted against Phantasm, Batman faces his newest and most [illegible] foe — much to his joy, I assure

Phantasm Art Courtesy Warner Bros.

*In an animated Gotham City, Kevin Conroy speaks up.*

By BOB MILLER



must fulfill those expectations. If you come up with a cartoon like they used to do 20 years ago, you're not going to satisfy a young audience.

That's why there's a cross-over appeal to adults, too, because the show doesn't condescend to anyone. They're writing good dramas, with good actors and good writing and music.

People react well to that. It proves

**Did you know that, at one point, Batman, Superman and Popeye roomed together? At Juilliard, in fact. Yes, Kevin Conroy, Christopher Reeve and Robin Williams were classmates.**

# THE NOBLE VOICE

*When the Dark Knight speaks, it's with a cold, impassioned voice hardened by an iron resolve, fueled by vengeance --and trained in the dramatics of Shakespeare. For the animated* Batman, *these are the qualities provided by actor Kevin Conroy, who has elevated the role beyond that of a typical cartoon superhero.*

*A native of Connecticut, Conroy began his acting career in 1973 at age 17, performing off-Broadway and attending Juilliard's Drama Center. There he roomed with Robin Williams, and developed his thespian skills under John Houseman's direction. After graduation in 1979, he toured with Houseman's The Acting Company, followed by a national tour of* Deathtrap. *He later starred in productions of* King Lear, Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Eastern Standard *and* Lolita.

*Since 1985, Conroy has worked predominantly in television, appearing as a regular on* Dynasty *(1987),* O'Hara *(1988),* Tour of Duty *(1990) and* Rachel Gunn, R.N. *His mini-series appearances include* George Washington, *and playing Ted Kennedy in* Kennedy. Batman: The Animated Series *is his first animated starring role.*

**COMICS SCENE:** How is the animated *Batman* more than just "illustrated radio"? Why is it so popular?

**KEVIN CONROY:** Because it's *not* done as a "cartoon." It's done as a dramatic series that happens to be animated.

Viewers, especially the young audience, are so tired of being condescended to in animation. The world has changed: Younger and younger kids are exposed to more and more. To entertain the young audience, you that if you give people quality, they'll tune in more. From what I've heard from other studios in town, it has raised the industry standard for TV animation. This is only going to benefit the audience, because the audience will get better and better shows.

**CS:** How did you get the role?

**CONROY:** I had never done an animated voice. I had done some voiceover work, but I'm primarily a theater and TV actor.

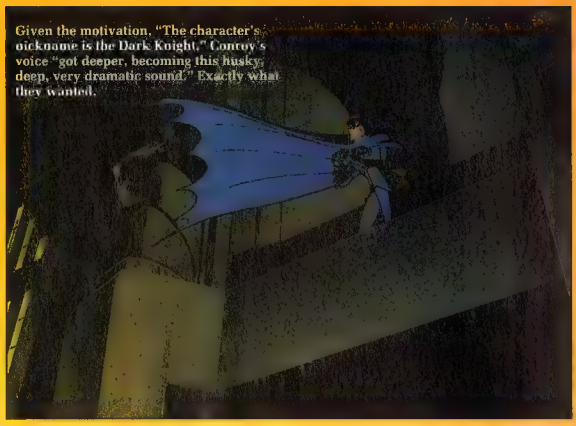
My agent said, "They're casting an animated series; why don't you do some voices?" So I went in and did a cold audition. The producers said, "The character's nickname is the Dark Knight. Use your imagination. What sound do you think a Dark Knight would make?" And so my voice got deeper, becoming this husky, deep, very dramatic sound. They said, "That's *exactly* what we want."

**CS:** Did you have any prior exposure to *Batman* that prepared you for the role?
**CONROY:** I never read comics as a kid. I went through very strict Catholic schools, and that kind of stuff was really frowned upon.

I had seen the Adam West TV series in the '60s, as a kid. But that seemed so different than what they were going for [in the animated series]. So, that was no source of information for me.
**CS:** So with limited knowledge of the character, how did you approach it?
**CONROY:** As an actor. As a performance. I approach each script like it's *Hamlet*. That's the *only* way to do it. You approach each one as if this is the best writing; this is the most interesting character; how you make him as three-dimensional, sympathetic and real and passionate as possible. The kind of actors they've attracted have approached the characters with that kind of seriousness.

The challenge is to only use your voice to express all that, and not rely on physicality. For an actor who has never done an animated voice, it's a challenge, because I've never been able to rely solely on my voice. I've always had other things to work for me.

When I'm doing Batman, every now and then I have to redo [my lines] because I've hit something—I hit the microphone or the side of the booth, and make these big banging sounds because I'm getting into it so much.



**Given the motivation, "The character's nickname is the Dark Knight," Conroy's voice "got deeper, becoming this husky, deep, very dramatic sound." Exactly what they wanted.**

I was approaching it as an acting exercise. Then, I started reading the comics, so I did some of the homework backwards. Mark Hamill was the one who said, "Well, you really should look at some of these books because it might help you."

Then again, it might not. The fun thing about having *no* background is that you come into it totally *fresh*, and approach it completely as an acting challenge, with no preconceived notions of what this guy should sound like, or how he should be. There's a certain sense of humor about him, which the producers love. They didn't know I was going to be that irreverent, which gives it a little more life. My classical theatrical background training makes me prepared to challenge some of the long, internal soliloquies they have for this character.

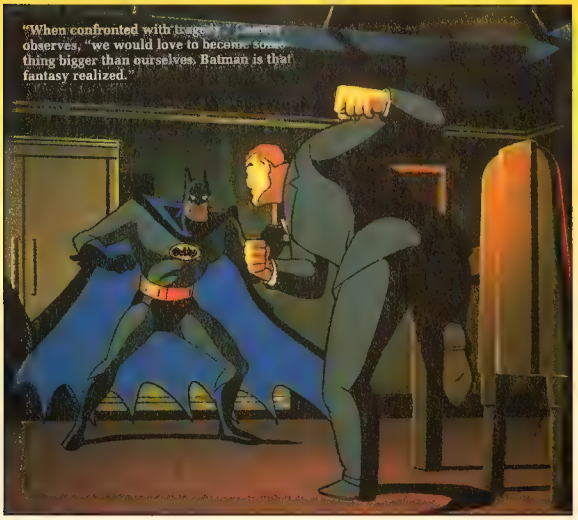
**"Every now and then I have to redo [my lines] because I've hit something," Conroy recounts. "I'm getting into it so much."**

Photo: Michael Lechner

**The faces (voices, really) of evil: That's Aron (Killer Croc) Kincaid up top, (following clockwise), Mark (The Joker) Hamill, Arleen (Harley Quinn) Sorkin, Diane (Poison Ivy) Pershing, Paul (The Penguin) Williams and Richard (Two-Face) Moll.**

The one I've found most challenging to do was "Perchance to Dream," where I played so many roles. There were long scenes that were soliloquies. I loved that, not only because it was a challenge for me, but because we really got into Batman's mind, and what makes him tick. I thought that was really powerful. Also the fact that some of it was in black and white, which I think is very courageous of the studio to do. And, the use of some Shakespeare. I found the whole thing elevating to the audience, rather than condescending.

I did the voice of Batman, Batman in an altered state (he was drugged), young Bruce Wayne, Bruce Wayne and then the father, Wayne Senior. So there were five voices that I was doing. It was so much fun doing scenes with myself. I was doing *[assumes voice]* Batman to Altered Batman. The nuances to keep it all subtly believable that it's the same person, but different enough so that the audience keeps track of the fact that it's different dimensions of the same person. It was a *challenge*, and fun, to be able to draw on those old theatrical skills to pull it off, and then have other actors come up afterwards and say, "That was *great*. That was passionate, what you were doing." And it was fun, because you think, "This is an animated series we're getting all excited about."


"When confronted with [a villain]," observes, "we would love to become something bigger than ourselves. Batman is that fantasy realized."

But the proof's in the pudding. The result has been the public reception; they really appreciate it.

**CS:** But when you're going from Bruce Wayne to Batman, what more is there than making your voice lower?

**CONROY:** There's much more to it, because—it's a hard thing to really explain. He has to be believably the same person with the same outlook, the same morals, the same everything. And

"None of us knew what the quality was going to be," remembers Conroy. "We were all blown away" by the animated series.

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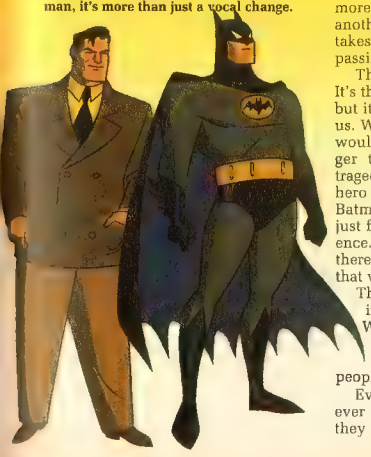


**When changing from Bruce Wayne to Batman, it's more than just a vocal change.**

yet, when he becomes Batman, it's more than his voice that changes. It's another aspect of his personality that takes over, and he becomes more impassioned, more noble.

That's what's great about Batman. It's the nobler aspects of Bruce Wayne, but it's also the nobler aspects of all of us. When confronted with tragedy, we would love to become something bigger than ourselves, and solve the tragedy. People fantasize about being a hero and helping someone in trouble. Batman is that fantasy realized—not just for Bruce Wayne, but for the audience. So when he gets into that voice, there's a *lot* more weight that goes into that voice than just changing it.

There's other thinking that must go into the character. Inwardly, Bruce Wayne is still an adolescent watching his parents being murdered. That will never leave him. And people really relate to that.

Everyone has those [times], whenever their heart has been broken, that they can relate to. That's human. Even though Bruce seems like he doesn't have a care in the world, very flip and has a sense of humor, sophistication and wealth, he's really a lonely, hurt person—overwhelmed by a great sadness that he has never been able to get over. Everyone appreciates that, because everyone has had those moments in their lives.

**CS:** When you started the series, did you have an idea that this was going to be a quality show?

**CONROY:** No, I had no idea. *None* of us had any idea. We got involved in it a year-and-a-half before it started airing. We started recording episodes during January or February '91. The reason it took so long was because the stories were taking much longer to write than the studio had thought. In setting the tone, there were two schools of thought: One wanted a comic-book show, and the other, a dramatic series. So, they tried to arrive at a middle ground, but I think the dramatic people far outweighed the comic people.

We started doing this in spring '91,

and they got together an amazing cast. Two hundred voices, and they're all actors like Harry Hamlin, Mark Hamill, Efrem Zimbalist Jr., Ed Asner, Adrienne Barbeau, Jean Smart, Stacy Keach and Dana Delany and Treat Williams—an unbelievable group of actors. It's amazing. I mean, *where* are they getting all these people? They're all busy, but they would make time for [the animated series] because everyone wanted to be part of it.

But no one knew what the quality was going to be until the first episodes came back from the [overseas] animators for looping. We went in to loop the extra lines, and people came out of those sessions with their eyes hanging out of their heads: [*incredulously*] "Have you *seen* the footage?" We were all blown away—we were just acting it as well as we could.

**CS:** Do you record with the cast as an ensemble, or does each actor record their part separately?

**CONROY:** All of us are in a room together, doing the whole script in sequence. Periodically, they [record separately] because someone's not available that day. When you're dealing with an average of eight or 10 actors per episode times 65 episodes, there are times that someone's not available. That's the only time we do things out of sequence.

Even in episodes where I'm Batman/Bruce Wayne, or Batman/Crazy Batman arguing with myself, doing different voices, they do it sequentially. They don't do all one voice and then the other. If they can get away with it, they do it as it's written, sequentially. It makes it more difficult and more challenging.

**CS:** What about the other actors that you've worked with? Like Adam West.

**CONROY:** He did the Grey Ghost, an older actor, and [it was] a very moving performance. He's a very gracious gentleman, as an actor, and as a person. I felt a little awkward because it was sort of his territory from the TV series. Here I was doing the voice, but he was so gracious about it. We had a wonderful session together, and he put me at ease. He loved playing that character. It was a beautiful performance, the producers were very happy with him, and he was, too.

**CS:** How about Loren Lester?

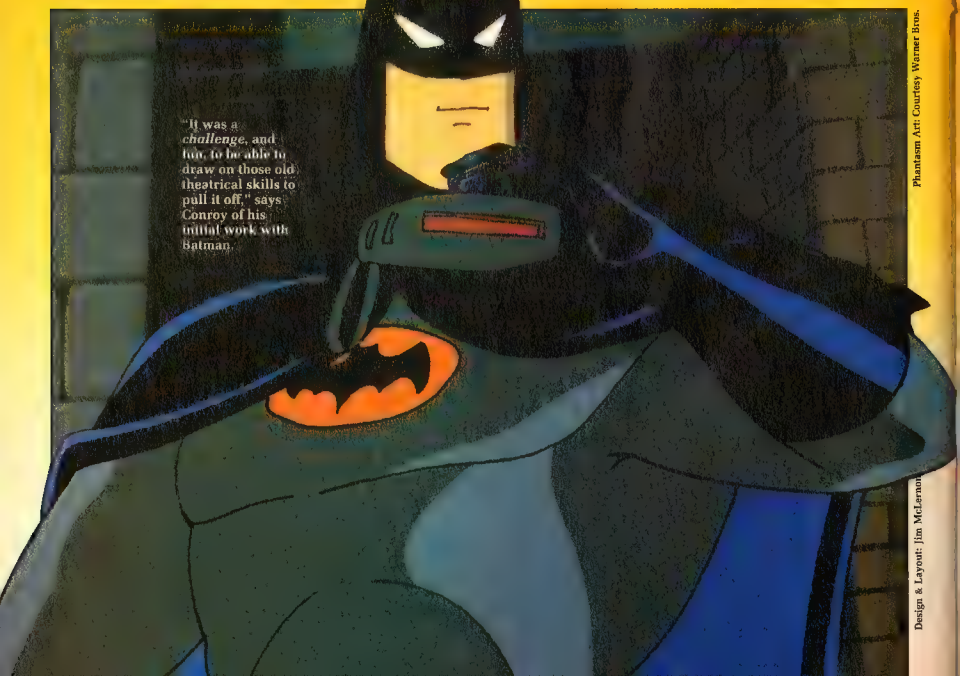
**CONROY:** That's Robin. Oh, he's great. I'm not sure how many episodes Robin has actually been in—about a dozen. I think he would like to have Robin in more episodes. He's a very good guy; he's a *very* good actor, and does the role very well.

But they wanted to concentrate, as the movies have, on the Dark Knight aspect of Batman. It makes it more dramatic when he's alone, in many of these situations. The lone hero kind of thing. Robin is a great character to have, periodically, but I don't think you would want to make him a constant, because it diffuses some of the drama for Batman.

**CS:** What about Efrem Zimbalist Jr.?

**CONROY:** [*Chuckles*] I'm tempted to say that Efrem is like acting with my father, but it's better than that. He's what you would want one's own father to be, the perfect father. He's very, very generous, very kind. He has had such a long career and done so much film work that one forgets the amount of stuff that he has done, how long he has been acting. So, he has a wealth of stories, and everyone loves him on the show. He's a true gentleman, a real pro. Also, I knew Stephanie Zimbalist at Juilliard. So, there was sort of a bridge there. I had never met him, but it was a contact through his daughter.

The relationship is funny, because the relationship between Bruce and Alfred, and Batman and Alfred is not unlike the relationship between me and Efrem. It makes it very easy. And we ad-lib periodically. We throw in an extra line [*chuckles*], and the producers vote as to whether it gets to stay.



"It was a *challenge*, and fun, to be able to draw on those old theatrical skills to pull it off," says Conroy of his initial work with Batman.

Phantasm Art: Courtesy Warner Bros.

Design & Layout: Jim McLernon

**CS:** And Bob Hastings?
**CONROY:** I call Bob Hastings "The Man That Time Forgot," because he has been acting forever, he's not a young man anymore, and yet he looks like he's 30. It's amazing; the man has not aged. I don't know how he has done it. He's very funny, very nice, a real pro with a very gentle disposition. That Commissioner Gordon gruffness is a put-on, he's not gruff at all.
**CS:** Ron Perlman?
**CONROY:** Ron came on for just a few episodes as a guest villain [Clayface], and he's a good example of people approaching the role from a very dramatic point-of-view, going into the character and giving a dramatic reading, rather than doing what one might consider a typical comic-book voice. He really delved into the mind of the character, and gave a very rich reading of what he thought the man was like. He's that kind of actor.
**CS:** Richard Moll?
**CONROY:** Richard Moll is a very funny man. *Very* funny. When he turns into Two-Face, and that monster comes out, you think, "Boy, where did *that* come from?" It's *surprising* because he's so funny, and a nice guy.
**CS:** Adrienne Barbeau?
**CONROY:** She has been very, very nice to work with. We have many mutual friends, actually, although I never knew her. The incredible thing about Adrienne is her voice. It's *so* seductive that it's perfect for that role. And it's very easy for her to do—she's very facile with her voice. She's seductive in person, too. We had a good time working with her.
**CS:** Paul Williams?
**CONROY:** Well, he's terrific, he's very funny. He has a great sense of humor about the whole thing.
**CS:** Mark Hamill?

**"As a performance, I approach each script like it's *Hamlet*. That's the *only* way to do it," the actor says.**

**CONROY:** Mark Hamill is so impressive doing the Joker, because he becomes sort of *mad* as he's doing it, physically. People sometimes underestimate Mark's talent because of Luke Skywalker. They think of him as just a young man because he has done that movie [*Star Wars*] so well. He's *so* much more than that. He's very multi faceted, and quite brilliant. His mind goes so fast, and he's able to improvise with the stuff sometimes, wildly, and it's a real pleasure watching him.
**CS:** What can you tell fans about *Mask of the Phantasm?*
**CONROY:** Well, it's great because they're not constrained by Standards and Practices from the network; the writers can do anything they want to do—within the confines of good taste. Batman has a love affair, and it's with a woman that he had gotten involved with years and years before, and had never done anything about.

The [casting and recording] director of our show is a lady named Andrea Romano, who is really the spark that keeps it all going. She's such a dynamite person; she can inspire a rock to give a good performance.

Early in the episodes' recording, I was trying to keep everyone's spirits up by kidding around, so every now and then I'll say something that's a little ridiculous in the Batman voice—in the middle of the scene, and it'll crack everyone up. I'm a little irreverent, but the producers like it and it makes the show more fun.

One of the earlier things I did was during a fight scene: [*grunts*] "Unh! Unh! Uhhhh! Unh! [*followed by a sigh*]—Oooooooohhh, Andrea." [*Chuckles*] Everyone was just destroyed, and we had to stop for five minutes. The booth, the producers, everyone just lost it because it *did* sound like the kind of sounds you would make doing something other than fighting. Andrea loved it.

Every week, during an episode, I would find a different place to put Andrea's name in. After a fall, after a grunt, I would go, "Oooohhh, Andrea."

*(continued on page 60)*

**Playing around during taping, Conroy would amuse fellow cast members and director Andrea Romano with sexual innuendo outtakes. *Mask of the Phantasm* pokes fun at that: Bruce Wayne's love interest is named Andrea.**

# DAKOTA COMBAT

## *The Shadow War explodes across the world of Milestone.*

By JOE NAZZARO

HE RELEASES THE VEIN, THE VOID RESOLUTION.
THE SNAPPING JAWS-SEEMINGLY HOOKED DOGS A DOG-HOOKED DOGS A DOG WITH IN FACT A MOUTH, IT'S IN FACT THE ONLY VISIBLE THE ONLY VISIBLE PART OF AN OTHERWISE PART OF AN OTHERWISE ENTIRELY INVISIBLE ENTIRELY INVISIBLE DOG. ROTTWEILER DOG. ROTTWEILER
A PRESERVED SPECIMEN OF ONE OF THEIR VICTIMS IS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OF SURGICAL SCIENCES IN CHICAGO.
IT IS NOT ON DISPLAY TO THE PUBLIC.
BEHOLD THE REGRETTABLY HUMAN.
ARF! ARF!
Art: Denys Cowan/ Jimmy Palmiotti
Design & Layout: Calvin Lee

**Hardware is among the many Dakotans recruited for the *Shadow War*.**

**From within Twilight comes his army of uncontrollable forces. They do his bidding, but at what price?**

Earlier this year, Milestone ravaged the comics cosmos when they created the Dakota Universe. Consisting of four monthly books—*Hardware*, *Icon*, *Blood Syndicate* and *Static*—set in the fictional city of Dakota, the fledgling line featured a new generation of African-American and Hispanic superheroes, with an emphasis on realistic dialogue and characterizations (see CS #36).

Most of the heroes and villains in Dakota share a common origin: A mysterious accident called The Big Bang. While numerous hints have been dropped, the actual nature of the Big Bang has never been fully explained—until now. *Shadow War*, an explosive crossover event, will run through all the Milestone books, also launching two new titles: *Shadow Cabinet* and *Xombi*.

According to writer/editor Dwayne McDuffie, who was largely responsible for the crossover concept, there won't be a single Milestone book whose sto-

ryline will be unaffected by the *Shadow War*. "There's an organization called the Shadow Cabinet," he explains, "which for a very long time has been helping humanity out, whether humanity wanted to be helped or not. They're very sure of themselves, and they've been doing this job for quite some time.

"Very recently, there was a split within the Shadow Cabinet, and a splinter group called the Star Chamber has formed. In order to protect themselves from the Shadow Cabinet, which is extremely powerful," McDuffie notes, "the new group decides to get their hands on the most powerful weapon in the Dakota Universe, the material left behind the Big Bang—the initial riot that created Static and most of the Blood Syndicate, and was in many ways the genesis of our universe.

"Because the Shadow Cabinet has lost several members to the Star Chamber, both organizations are now trying to recruit new members to bol-

Art: Denys Cowan/Jimmy Palmiotti

**Twilight first tries to peacefully recruit Xombi into Shadow Cabinet, but all hell breaks loose as Twilight is excited.**

**The Blood Syndicate members know something's amiss with the Shadow teams: They don't give into threats; they know they can take them.**

Art: Walt Simonson/Colors: Noelle

ster their weakened groups. Those new members will be characters that have been running around in Dakota for the last year, such as Icon, Rocket, Static, Hardware and Xombi, who's a new character, but we'll reveal that he has been around for a while. All of these characters will go to one side or the other, and the split will be over how that material should be used and what for—the war is for control of the weapon."

The first part of *Shadow War* takes place in *Hardware* #11, where Iron Butterfly, field commander of the Shadow Cabinet, enlists Hardware into her service. McDuffie, the *Shadow War* scripter, promises a strong start to the crossover, but admits it isn't quite the one he originally had in mind.

"We had a few of our famous Milestone retreats where we all sat down together and plotted out the crossover in great detail, and it was terrifying, because I actually wrote an entire issue of *Hardware* with someone on the wrong team! I had somebody who I wanted to be from the Shadow Cabinet trying to recruit Hardware, and that character was really in the Star Chamber, so I had to rewrite the issue!"

A week later, the crossover continues in *Icon* #9, as Donner and Blitzen of the Shadow Cabinet—two women, one possessing super-strength, the other, super-speed—try to recruit Icon, but they're not interested in his teen sidekick Rocket.

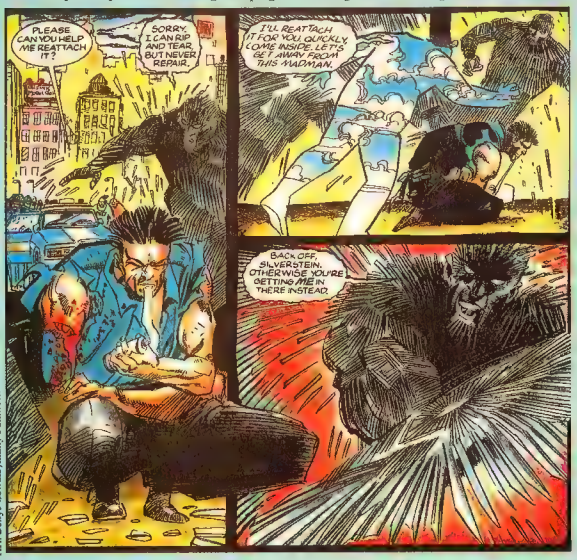
Art: Walt Simonson/Colors: Noelle

Art: Walt Simonson/Colors: Noelle

Static will still be the kid of the line; he reacts to things as an adolescent would.

Icon is a much more lucrative member of Shadow Cabinet than his partner. He's sent for, but Rocket is left in the dust.

Rainsaw packs quite a cut as he goes up against Twilight in recruiting Xombi.


PLEASE CAN YOU HELP ME REATTACH IT?
SORRY. I CAN RIP AND TEAR, BUT NEVER REPAIR.
I'LL REATTACH IT FOR YOU. QUICKLY. COME INSIDE. LET'S GET AWAY FROM THIS MADMAN.
BACK OFF SILVERSTEIN. OTHERWISE YOU'RE GETTING ME IN THERE INSTEAD.

Art: Denys Cowan/Jimmy Palmiotti

## Missions Improbable

The way I really think of it is, *if* the Justice League was being run by the CIA, it would be like this," says Robert L. Washington III, who will be writing the monthly *Shadow Cabinet* book. "My feeling is, when you have this small a number of people having that much power, and that much ability to change the world, something's going to happen. There's bound to be some corruption and compromise in the original ideals, and it's also inevitable that they'll make a difference in the world. That's a guarantee, but it's not always going to be for the best, and that's what I'll be dealing with in *Shadow Cabinet*."

Washington will be joined on *Shadow Cabinet* by penciller John Paul Leon, who also works with him on the monthly *Static*, and inker Rober Quijano. "As far as the structure," he says, "I want to take the way they solved problems in *Mission: Impossible*, and then add the characterization you saw on *Hill Street Blues*. Throw in all their superpowers—it's *The Shadow Cabinet*."

The Shadow Cabinet's roster consists of several established Milestone characters, as well as a few new super-humans debuting during the Shadow War. "It's basically a pick-and-choose kind of team," says Washington. "There are about nine or 10 characters specific to the team, plus Hardware, Icon and Static. The team's makeup is going to be different each issue.

"In most of the adventures, the

The third engagement in the *Shadow War* follows that same week in *Xombi* #0, which introduces the first of Milestone's two spin-off titles (see sidebars). "It's very hard to describe," says McDuffie of what may well be the company's *strangest* book. "It's written by John Rozum, and drawn by Denys Cowan and Jimmy Palmiotti, doing the best stuff they've ever done together. It's a very different flavor for the Dakota Universe.

"Xombi is a scientist named David Kim who ends up with nanobots in his bloodstream—near-microscopic machines that can alter matter on a molecular level—and these machines keep him from dying. He doesn't want to be a superhero, doesn't want to be involved in any of this, and he constantly ends up being pulled into the

main character you'll be seeing will be Iron Butterfly, the tactical field leader. She's a Palestinian, and has the power to control various iron and other ferrous-based metals. She also wears an iron suit, which she can use for weaponry as well. She's the field leader because of her experience moving around the Middle East with her family, going from war zone to war zone. She's a very calm, very *tactical* kind of person.

"Dharma is the leader of the Shadow Cabinet. He's an Eastern Indian, and I don't want to mention what his power is, because nobody in the Shadow Cabinet, including Icon, is going to know," the writer continues. "He seems to have the ability to know much more than anyone wants him to know, and he never seems to be wrong.

"The other person you'll probably be seeing in many adventures is Sideshow, a shapeshifter. He's a sort of neo-hippie, which is very strange, because he's a fairly violent character. He knows how to solve problems, but he adopts a laidback attitude.

"Some of the other new characters introduced during the Shadow War include Plus, Donner and Blitzen, Twilight and Iota. Plus is a teenage Indian girl who can control the kinetic energy field around her body, and uses it by shaping it into various patterns.

"Donner is super-strong and seems to be the result of a genetic experiment, but she doesn't talk too much about herself. We don't know much about Blitzen's origin at all except that she has super-speed. The two almost always work together.

"Twilight will first be seen in *Xombi* #0. He's a Jewish research scientist who just sort of blew himself out of reality one day, but was still tied to Earth. Eventually, someone came along who could see him, ghostlike and floating around reality, and pulled him back. Now he can go between this reality and his pocket universe, and pull people into it and out of it as well.

"You'll be seeing Iota in the *Blood Syndicate* crossover. Her character was developed by Ivan Velez. She's able to shrink herself and, for a limited time, a certain amount of objects as well, so even when she's normal-sized, she can carry a doll-sized arsenal with her."

Washington also mentions one particular character who will have great significance in *Shadow War*, but refuses to reveal much about him. "*Shadow Cabinet* #0 features a surprise mystery character," he hints, "who has never been seen anywhere else before, but is so important to the entire crossover that you wouldn't believe it. He's a character I created, and I'm incredibly proud of him."

Looking at the group dynamics, Washington points to some of the classic Stan Lee/Jack Kirby Marvel team books for inspiration. "When I look at the old *Fantastic Four* or *Avengers*, one of the big appeals with those books was that they are heroes but they argue and fight a lot. With the Shadow Cabinet, they have a specific purpose: To make the world a better place. Sometimes the group dynamics can get very strained, but they're people who put aside their differences to work for the common good. Iron Butterfly is a Palestinian and Twilight is an Israeli, but they put that aside.

"In those old *FF* and *Avengers*, they always used to argue and fight, but in the end, they always got together to bash the bad guys. That's definitely going to be a main component of what I'm doing," Washington says. "Because they have this goal, and they're willing to put everything into it, then they can sometimes argue or scrabble among themselves. In the end, they're all working to make the planet better."

*—Joe Nazzaro*

Art: Walt Simonson/Colors: Noelle

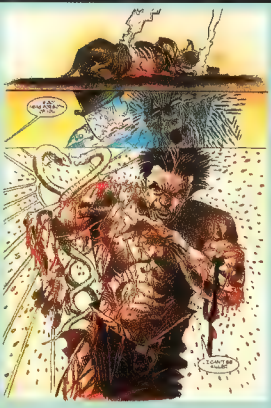
**"They have this goal," says Robert Washington III of Shadow Cabinet, "and they're willing to put everything into it."**

stranger, darker areas of the Dakota Universe."

Rozum, who's scripting the upcoming *Xombi* monthly title, thinks Milestone readers will enjoy the character's debut appearance. "Basically, it follows the same premise as the other books—the Star Chamber sends one of their agents to beat the other guy and recruit him as well," Rozum says. "There's a character from the Star Chamber called Twilight, who's a walking Magritte painting, and he's sort of a doorway into a pocket universe separate from this one.

"The Star Chamber character is called Rainsaw, and he's basically a blizzard of metal snowflakes. He can condense himself into man-shaped form, and there's one instance where he flattens himself out against a wall and moves his molecules—he's like a movie screen depicting information.

"Xombi's goal is to have a normal life. One character explains to him that that's no longer possible; once you cross that threshold into the world of the strange, you're stuck with it. From then on, Xombi is really a peripheral part of the Dakota Universe."



Art: Denys Cowan/Jimmy Palmiotti

The *Shadow War* kicks into high gear with *Blood Syndicate* #10, a double-sized, 48-page issue. Unlike the other Dakota characters, the Blood Syndicate members are less than receptive to overtures from either group. "When they try to recruit my characters, they *all* laugh in their

**Xombi's powers are more than anyone expects—much more.**

# Undying Anti-hero

Art: Walt Simonson/Colors: Noelle

*Xombi* is Vertigo, but weird," laughs Denys Cowan, penciller of Milestone's newest and possibly most bizarre title. "Put that quote in; it will piss a lot of people off!"

Much of that weirdness stems from the mind of Michigan-based scripter John Rozum, who has previously written for such titles as *Clive Barker's Hellraiser* and *Book of the Damned*. A relative newcomer to Milestone, Rozum is finding Xombi one of the most exciting characters he has ever helped create. "He's basically the guy you hated in high school," the writer explains. "He's a nice guy, very good-looking; always got the good grades and the most beautiful girl in school.

"David Kim became a medical student, but because he was also a bit squeamish about pain and so forth, he decided to go into research and not actually into practice," Rozum says. "He ends up working for this medical research firm, and one of his projects involves nano-technology, which are microscopic robots which can actually manipulate atoms and rearrange molecules. They can take any organic matter and break it down into its molecules, and then reassemble them into something else. The example used most often is taking grass, dirt and water and using the nano-machines to turn that into a T-bone steak, entirely bypassing the need for a cow.

"Kim was working with this technology, looking into cellular regeneration for people who had lost limbs or damaged organs, and the night he was working on one of his experiments, an accident occurs, which is revealed in issue #1. These nano-machines are put into his body as a last resort to save his life, and now they regenerate his body on a constant basis—sometimes in ways he rather they didn't. He literally becomes a person who can never die."

JEEZUS, HELL OF A SIDE-EFFECT, PAL. THAT'S GOT TO MAKE LIVING FOREVER INTOLERABLE. ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN'T DO?
IT'S NOT SO MUCH WHAT I CAN'T DO, IT'S WHAT I DON'T HAVE TO DO.
I DON'T HAVE TO BRUSH MY TEETH ANYMORE, NO MORE HALITOSIS. I DON'T NEED TO BATHE. I HAVEN'T HAD TO CRAP OR PISS IN OVER FOUR WEEKS.
DEEZ.
YEAH. MY BODY USES EVERYTHING THERE'S NO WASTE TO BE PROCESSED.

Art: Denys Cowan/Jimmy Palmiotti

**A bit of a horror style "with supernatural overtones," *Xombi* transgresses the regular superhero book.**

**The nano-technology within David Kim gives him his powers, but "he's not necessarily controlling them," says writer John Rozum.**

Rozum promises that *Xombi* will be totally different from any other Milestone title. "The tone I'm trying to hit is like a David Cronenberg film, but with supernatural overtones. There's a lot of body horror going on, which stems from the fact that these things are inside Kim's body. There will be a point of revelation when he discovers he's not necessarily controlling them, but they have an agenda of their own, and there will be some really hard consequences when he finds out. They're keeping him alive, but they're making him a very dangerous person— to himself and the people he cares about.

"I tried to keep *Xombi #0* in tone with the regular books, so as not to throw people. I'm hoping, unless I completely screwed up, that after the last panel in issue #1, people will definitely pick up #2. I don't want to spoil it, but he has the most disgusting origin you've ever seen!"

The cast of villains and supporting characters in *Xombi* will also be fairly bizarre. "There's the Four Stable Boys of the Apocalypse," notes Rozum, "the ones who get the Four Horsemen's horses ready. There's a man who was a 14th-century knight, who can only come into our world now by projecting himself into dead bodies. The first time he does it, he makes the mistake of projecting himself into a restaurant, so he's basically walking around as all the meat in the restaurant joined together as a man.

"There'll be some more traditional villains later on—traditional in that they wear costumes and have super-villain-type names, but their powers are going to be quite a bit more extraordinary than usual. One villain is a boy who ran away and joined the circus when he was 12, but there was an accident, and he literally *joined* the circus—it has become part of his body, so he wears this costume that's a big tent with the circus inside. This stuff is going to be very different."

Cowan, who will be pencilling *Xombi*, as well as *Hardware*, is handling this new book in a completely different style. "Since this stuff is so strange, it doesn't look anything like *Hardware*," he insists. "You might find some similarity seeing as I drew both of them. I believe in approaching every job from the aspect of the story, and that dictates how the art will look. *Xombi* goes places where no comic book has gone before, and it probably won't be able to come back!"

*—Joe Nazzaro*

faces!" declares writer Ivan Velez Jr. "The Shadow Cabinet is the first to get there, and of course the Blood Syndicate can smell an agenda on them.

"What the Shadow Cabinet says is, 'If you don't join us, we're going to have to get rid of you,' because there are two characters in the Blood Syndicate—Fade and Flashback—who have temporal powers, and they're going to be very important in future storylines for the whole Dakota Universe."

The crossover's penultimate chapter takes place in *Static* #8, where the teen superhero is recruited by Plus of the Shadow Cabinet. "She's about Static's age," says Robert L. Washington III, who writes both *Static* and *Shadow Cabinet*. "That's why the Shadow Cabinet sends her after him. She'll be in the regular series as well.

"In each of the crossovers, what we really wanted to do was give everybody a chance to write a solid, great version of their book—an exemplary issue of *Icon*, a really great *Hardware*—and at the same time fit into the overall *Shadow War*. With *Static*, despite the crossover's nature, it's still going to be a typical *Static* story. It's not going to be dark and shadowy, with Static being stalked by weird merciless

*(continued on page 60)*

By
KIM
HOWARD
JOHNSON

# CASTING RUNES

## *Barry Windsor-Smith keeps creating.*

The newest addition to the Malibu Ultraverse is *not* a typical superhero. In fact, *Rune* is *more* than a space vampire, according to co-creator Barry Windsor-Smith.

Premiering in 11 different Ultraverse titles in three-page chapters, *Rune* fits into their superhero universe in a rather surprising way.

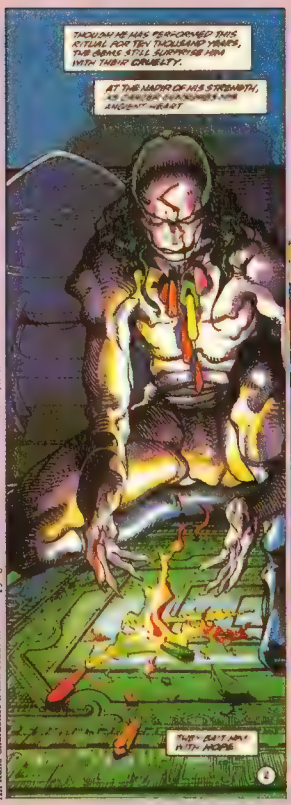
"Rune is interested in the power that created the Ultraverse heroes," says Windsor-Smith. "This whole thing is going to slot into the Ultraverse, but I'm not saying how. Rune's a vampire, a bad guy, not of this earth. He has been around a long time, as most vampires have, but Rune is different from most clichéd vampires—he's dying of cancer. *Rune #0*, the first 11 segments, explores Rune's history, but not his origin."

Each of the 11 chapters deals with a different time period as Rune's life on Earth is unveiled. "The first chapter starts out in the present day, and then we fly back and see all that brought Rune to that first chapter, and we close down the story in the present. It starts around 95 B.C. or so, and goes through all the different changes in his life," he says. "Rune was a creature of great power—he was considered a god in ancient Africa and took great advantage of it; he would simply eat people at his own will! His main interest at the time was simply blood.

"During the 33-page recap of his life, he becomes more and more involved with the need for power. We see him at different periods of history. In one three-page story, he tries to get information from Nikola Tesla. I read tons of material about Tesla and I'm absolutely blown away by the guy—he was super-human! Rune usually gets what he wants through violence, but with Tesla, he simply sat and talked with him—of course, Tesla didn't know he was talking with a vampire! The story was a way of showing that Rune has the power to mesmerize people, and to show that Rune had more respect for Tesla than for other people, because Tesla was something of a magician himself—in fact, the story is called 'The Sorcerer.'

"Rune needs power to sustain his life, but he also enjoys power," continues Windsor-Smith, but he points out that Rune's lust for power may have led to his undoing. "In the 1940s, Rune flew to the South Pacific to investigate a source of power, and got caught in a bomb test. He was almost killed, blown 1,000 miles away. He was irradiated by the bomb and is literally a dying creature, so he needs power to stay alive. He's seeking a way to overcome the effects of the bomb, which caused an alien form of cancer. It all sets up the modern-day conflicts in *Rune* #1."

The title character incorporates other magical elements in addition to his vampiric abilities. "He's called 'Rune' because of the crystals that he wears," the artist says. "They're sort of his laptop computer. They're alien crystals, but he can interact with them.


THOUGH HE HAS RE-FORMED THIS ACTUAL BODY TEN THOUSAND TIMES, THE GODS STILL SURPRISE HIM WITH THEIR CRUELTY.
AT THE NADIR OF HIS STRENGTH, AS CANCER RAVAGES HIS ANCIENT HEART
THEY CAN'T ANY WITH HOPE

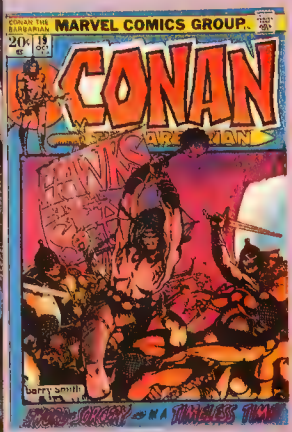
All Rune Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1993 Malibu Comics Entertainment, Inc.

**Rune, in and of himself, is an all-powerful creature—but even he falls prey to cancer; he may not die but he'll know the disease is there.**

He can store information about the people he has killed inside of them, and call up their life essences. When he needs information or a direction, he'll consult the runes, just as the ancients did."

Windsor-Smith says he doesn't want to plan out the storyline for the ongoing series very far in advance, in order to keep himself fresh. "If I know exactly what's going to happen, I get bored *really* quickly, because it becomes just a matter of drawing the pictures," he explains. "I like to let the story tell itself. Often, I don't know what's going to happen any more than anybody else does. But, it's going to be big!"

He believes the book has very strong characters, noting that the supporting cast was initially intended to star in this series before Rune's development. "There is a second source of power in the Ultraverse, and a group of individuals who have been endowed with the power of cold fusion," the creator notes. "They are Rune's main target. He doesn't know that it's cold fusion—that means nothing to him—but he's interested in the essence of a new power. It puts him into contact with the group of three people. The book




**Bringing Conan the Barbarian to the four-color world, Barry Windsor-Smith took the Cimmerian on epic adventures.**

was actually going to be called *Fuzion* at one point, and the main characters were going to be these three kids who have the power of cold fusion. Rune was actually a background villain, but when [writer] Chris Ulm and I were going over early ideas, I said, 'Who is this vampire bloke?' and Chris really didn't know for sure. I kept thinking, 'Vampire...' and the whole thing got changed. The book is now named after the vampire, and the kids are in the background! Actually, they're going to become a focal point in Rune's quest to stay alive."

In addition to the artwork, Windsor-Smith is plotting *Rune* with scripter Ulm, and Steve Gerber, who was originally editing the series, is now becoming more actively involved. "He's sort of an editor with teeth," laughs Windsor-Smith, "and he rewrites a lot of stuff."

Windsor-Smith first made his mark in comics on the first two dozen issues of *Conan the Barbarian*; after a several-year hiatus, he re-established himself with today's fans through his work on *Machine Man* and *Weapon X* for Marvel (CS #18), before going to Valiant Comics. He notes that *Rune* has little in common with his previous characters, including Conan.

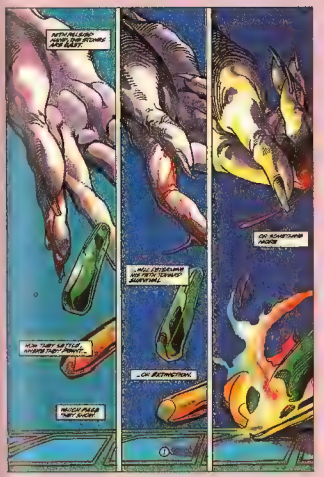
"Conan's basic thing is fighting and killing people. He draws his sword if anybody looks at him sideways and lops their arms off! When I was doing *Conan*, he didn't really get into many fights. He did at the end, and it was up to [writer] Roy [Thomas] to say, 'Well, isn't there going to be any action in this story?' " he laughs. "I saw Conan as a guy whom I could investigate as a personality, that I could put through paces. I was far more interested in his emotional rather than physical reactions.

"You can take that to the Nth, to some of the comics that have been coming out for the past decade or more. If there's a conflict between the Avengers and the Banana-Men, they slug it out and put it on the cover—there'll be 15 Banana-Men all facing the Avengers, about to pummel each other. This is the leading precept of adventure comic books. To me, that has *always* seemed the most banal, ludicrous premise. If there was an unpleasant alien on the original *Star Trek*, they would take out their blasters; on *The Next Generation*, if there's a conflict, they negotiate. Isn't that a far better way to go? I'm not arguing for *Conan the Negotiator*, where he talks his way out of fights, but I've always thought that the big battles and physical reaction to conflict are really dim-witted.

"Now, having said that, there's going to be a *lot* of violence in *Rune*. The point I'm trying to make in my own befuddled way is that I'm *far* more interested in the character, the emotional, internal workings of a space vampire, than the fact that he can bite peoples' heads off and eat their hearts, grisly things like that. *Rune* is a character book, not a blood and guts book. I flatter myself to say that just about all of my comic-book work has been about characters."

*Rune* marks Windsor-Smith's first comics project since his departure from Valiant, and he couldn't be happier about working for Malibu.

"I was getting offers from a lot of people. Certainly, the Image boys were always there, making offers and counter-offers. At one point, Todd [McFarlane] said to me, 'Oh, Barry, it doesn't matter about bloody negotiations—whatever they give you, we're gonna give you more anyway. Just stop negotiating with everybody, will ya?' " he laughs. "Actually, I did want to work with Todd, and I had been talking with Jim Lee, too. I'm still open to that, I would still like to work with those guys. But, Malibu had a thor-


WITH ALL SIGNS AND LOGIC AS TO RUNES ARE SET!
OH, SOMETHING MORE!
ALL CREATURES HAVE AN INTO-VERSE SURVIVAL
HOW THEY GOT TO IT... WHERE THEY ARRIVE...
...OR DESTRUCTION.
MUCH PAGE THAT MUCH!

**The runes the character uses are "sort of his laptop computer," notes Windsor-Smith. "When he needs information, he'll consult the runes."**

oughly solid offer, and I saw many possibilities there. When I first met with Dave Olbrich and Chris Ulm, I thought, 'These are a nice bunch of guys.' We got along very well and became good friends. I thought it would be a good thing so I gave it a try."

He says the three characters of Fuzion have stimulated his interest. "No single member of the group can effect the fusion power on his own—it must be a chain reaction when all three of them connect," he says. "One of them, Eric, is pretty well developed. He's about 18 years old, is from Scottsdale, Arizona and *thinks* he's leading a perfectly ordinary life. He doesn't know that years before, he was abducted, taken away from his then-parents, brainwashed, and has *no* idea that he's one-third of the chain reaction. We aren't as sure what we want to do with the second member, but that's the way I work—we'll know how to make her work when I address it.

"The third member is a 26-year-old from Venice, California called Noel Robinson. The same thing was done to him, but he was given a totally different lifestyle by the brainwashing technique. He's the guy that I've developed—he's not an ordinary guy like Eric. He's far more attuned to the ethereal, and always knew there was something different about his life. The truth is, his life is a lie and he doesn't know it—10 years ago, he was taken and experimented on. He knows that something special is going to happen in his life, but he has no idea how phenomenal it's going to be! I'm really looking forward to developing him!"

Windsor-Smith says he doesn't plan out everything to the last detail when he works, but approaches the story's premise and lets his characters take over. "I may know what's going to happen three pages ahead, but I do *not* know how it's going to end!" he says. "I may have a vague idea and I'll lean toward that ending, but if something happens during the story that pushes that ending out and toward another ending, then I'll do that! This is the way I write. If I hear a word or sentence that doesn't ring true, then I'll know that I'm manipulating the characters and back off."

According to Windsor-Smith, this improvisational approach keeps his work fresher. "When I come to my drawing table in the morning, I have a vague idea about what they might be saying today, but if they change their mind overnight, I just have to go with it," he says. "I enjoy the adventures of the people I create as much as I hope the people who are reading the books are. I didn't know what the ending of *Weapon X* was going to be, just as Logan didn't! I had *no idea* just what exactly Archer and Armstrong were going to do from issue to issue—I think most of the solicitations for promoting *Archer & Armstrong* were made up by the people in the office! *I* didn't know what they were going to be doing—I would just sit down one day and say, 'Well, I think they're in the south of France today. What could happen in the south of France?' And off they would go! I love working like that. If I knew from page one to page 22 all that was going to happen, and how the plot would twist on page 16—*boredom*! I wouldn't have the energy to draw it."

His approach is what also keeps him excited about doing comics. "The process that I use to create a story and characters makes me feel like I'm meeting new people all the time," he says. "It's the characters—and the process that I use to let them create their life—that keeps me going."

The initial 11 chapters that comprise *Rune* #0 were very difficult because there were only three pages to tell each of them, he explains. "I like to let my stories sprawl and go where they want to go," the creator notes.

**"I like to let my stories sprawl and go where they want to go," the creator notes.**

All Art: Barry Windsor-Smith

Design & Layout: Calvin Lee

**Though he's enjoying work on *Rune*, Windsor-Smith is most proud of an *Epic Illustrated* story he did, "The Beguiling."**

After working nearly 25 years in the comics industry, Windsor-Smith says the biggest changes have come about in recent years.

"As a creator, you don't have to be tied to publishers who want to tell you what to do," he says. "I've always been radically against the comics establishment, the powers-that-be. One of the reasons I was in such conflict with Marvel years ago—and I've done things off-and-on since *Conan*—is because I have such contempt for the business of it. I know artists and writers who consider themselves in a business, rather than being artists and writers. Of course, you have to be reasonably hip about business or you'll get screwed left, right and center, but just in the past year—largely because of the Image boys—this field can be free of the encumberment of the movers and shakers and users. I don't feel creators should have to be yoked by the publishers, and that is the biggest change of all. It allows for personal freedom. The biggest change is the outlook of the younger creators, and I applaud them for having the balls to do what they did. I'll do all I can to make sure that people who have that kind of spirit will always win out over this maddening business."

Windsor-Smith studied for three-and-a-half years in art school in his native Britain, though he says his training was largely on-the-job. His first Marvel Comics work was pencilling *X-Men* #53. Despite appearances, though, the artist says he wasn't told to draw like Jack Kirby.

"I just drew like Jack!" he explains. "That wasn't an attempt on anyone's part to subvert me into a Kirby-esque style. I used to read comics as a kid, and in the middle of my college years, Jack Kirby blossomed into the giant that he is. The stuff that he was producing blew me away. I had lost interest in comics for a while, and when I came back, I was ready to do my own thing. I was ready to do what I wanted to do, and I was ready to do it the way I wanted to do it. I was ready to do it the way I wanted to do it. I was ready to do it the way I wanted to do it.

est in comic books and wanted to be an illustrator—it was Jack Kirby who drew me back into comics. I still am utterly blown away by Jack Kirby's 1960s material—they galvanized me. I was in art school, but I wanted to *be* Jack Kirby. I never copied him, but I did emulate him. I wanted to work for Marvel Comics, but it simply never occurred to me that if I wanted to draw for Marvel, I had better draw in the Marvel style. It was me being totally infatuated with Kirby's genius. I was drawing like Kirby, doing my best to draw just like Jack. It was lucky for me, because Stan said, 'We could use a kid like that!' When my style started changing within a year or so, my storytelling was so strong it didn't matter that my Pre-Raphaelite and Alphonse Mucha influences were coming out."

He left comics during the '70s and started his own company, Gorblimey Press, and studied art while producing his own posters and lithographs, trying to shake off his comic-book style. Windsor-Smith says he never intended to return to comics during his hiatus.

"I was sickened and disgusted with the field—not with the art form, but the business," he says. "Luckily for me, I've been around so long, and shown that I don't want to be messed with, people just don't mess around with me any more."

Just before he returned to comics, Windsor-Smith worked on the second *Conan* movie. "Luckily, I got no credit for that, because it was abysmal," he laughs. "I certainly didn't come back to comics for the money, because it was dreadful. I just wanted to do it again—to get back to that form. I did *Machine Man* with Herb Trimpe. He really helped me get going again, because I hadn't even looked at comics for years. It was Herb who helped me get back into the swing of things. I did a couple of fill-ins and *Weapon X*, but I still wasn't sure I wanted to continue with comics, because *Weapon X* was so intense and depressing. Then, I got involved with Valiant. For no reason that I can attribute to Valiant, it was a period where I decided, 'I think I'll stay in comics for another 10 years and see what I can pull out of this art form.' "

Since he decided to stay but didn't want to work for Marvel, when he was approached by Bob Layton, he agreed to work for Valiant Comics, which had just been founded by Jim Shooter. "Shooter was having one hell of a time trying to get *anyone* to work for him, because he pretty much burned his bridges professionally," Windsor-Smith says. "Bob was very close with Shooter. Bob called me up to draw a few things and I agreed, more as a favor than anything else. Then, I just got more and more involved with them. There was the whole debacle with Jim being fired that dragged me further and further into the maelstrom now known as Valiant Comics."

Windsor-Smith has mixed feelings about his tenure at Valiant, enjoying his friendship with many of the

**"*Rune* is a character book," says its creator, "not a blood and guts book" although, "there's going to be a *lot* of violence."**

younger artists and writers while being largely dissatisfied with its management. "When Jim was at the wheel, there was a lot of conflict and nothing was wholly comfortable. When Jim *wasn't* at the wheel, nothing was wholly comfortable—just in a different way. I can't say I didn't enjoy myself, because I always enjoyed working with the kids up there tremendously—Sean Chen, Maurice Fontenot, Jorge Gonzalez and the other so-called 'knobs'—a term they hate, and rightly so. Since I quit the company, they've all shown me such support and friendship that it touches me deeply. The management was the problem with Valiant. I have *no* time for the negative side of talent management and control, so I wanted out very badly. I tried to negotiate a contract for almost a year. It cost me a bundle of money, but when it was plain it wasn't going to work out, I just quit outright."

Now that he and *Rune* are settled in with Malibu, Windsor-Smith says he's delighted with their relationship. "I've dealt with quite a few different companies, and not just comics companies," he says. "You can walk into a situation and still be carrying the stigma of the last situation you were in that didn't work out. It's just like relationships, where you'll meet somebody new, but your last relationship was so awful that you hope you're not carrying anything into the new relationship. Malibu is the first time I've ever felt really comfortable with the folks. Chris Ulm struck me as a real straight-ahead guy. He was a little bit cautious of me, because I came there with my reputation preceding me, but he was doing very well in the face of that! They're all nice people, and I enjoy the atmosphere of the place. They're certainly not stingy with money; that's another thing that's a feather in their cap. I've got choices, but I really wanted to go someplace where I could feel OK about the people I'm with. It may not sound like a valuable business concept, but it's a personal concept for me—I want to like the people I'm working with, and I like the Malibu people."

Windsor-Smith says that even though he has spent all this time in comics, there are still many stories that he hopes to tell—and he's constantly thinking of new ones.

"Just this morning, I was thinking about a new concept, and I can see it spreading out a long way, and I can see the characters spreading out in front of me. I said to myself, 'Gee, I hope I can live long enough to get all this out! I've got to quit smoking, start eating right, get some exercise...' It's a high adventure fantasy story, but fantasy in my way—fantasy that's grounded in reality. There are certainly swords involved, people on horseback in strange garb, and it's going to be funny because I like doing comedy. It's pretty much a mixture of all the things I've done in the field in 25 years—leaving out *X-Men* #53!" laughs Barry Windsor-Smith.

"I just want to stick around long enough to tell all the stories I want to tell. And, I've got a *lot* more to come. I've got many more characters I want to investigate!"

*In another world, a vengeful Bruce Wayne becomes...Green Lantern.*

By CRAIG W. CHRISSINGER

# GUARDIAN of the BAT LANTERN

As to why Batman dominates the Elseworlds line, Mike Barr sees his origin as the easiest to rework for other variations on a theme.

All Art: Jerry Bingham

Returning to the Green Lantern universe after nearly a decade, Mike W. Barr is adding a definite new wrinkle to the character—combining him with Batman in the January Elseworlds graphic novel, *In Darkest Knight.*

"I like Green Lantern a great deal," he remarks. "He is, of course, one of the classic Silver Age heroes from DC. I wrote *Green Lantern* for a year about a decade ago, and suddenly this idea sprang to mind. It's one of those two-sentence springboards, 'What if Bruce Wayne became Green Lantern? What would happen there?' "

The story begins on a note similar to the well-known Batman legend. "It does spin off the famous scene where Bruce is sitting in his study, wondering what guise he will take to strike fear into the hearts of criminals. There's a bat, but it's scared away by a

**Why couldn't Bruce Wayne be inspired by a crashing spaceship instead of bats? Anything's possible.**

crashing spaceship. Basically, Batman becomes Green Lantern."

In fact, the dying Abin Sur appoints Bruce Wayne the new Green Lantern of the local space sector. The "Bat-Lantern" vows to bring his parents' killer to justice, while concentrating his efforts on Earthbound criminals.

"There are a number of characters from the *Batman* books, who are sort of recalibrated for this story. We're able to make more use of Harvey Dent as district attorney of Gotham City, for instance, before he became Two-Face. It's interesting to see his relationship with the character of Bat-Lantern."

Combining the two heroic characters felt natural and presented few difficulties. "It worked like a charm to have Bruce Wayne become Green Lantern," Barr notes. "Green Lantern essentially is a policeman, albeit one with the most powerful weapon in the universe. And, then, if you accept that Bruce Wayne basically becomes a policeman, you would say, 'Yeah, of course, the two work together.' Essentially, that's what Batman is, although he works outside the system."

Bat-Lantern's method of crime-fighting and his desire to stay on Earth create somewhat of a disagreement between the Guardians of the Universe and himself. "He's the Green Lantern, but he's *also* Bruce Wayne, so he comes into conflict with the Guardians early on," Barr states. "Of course, Hal Jordan's Green Lantern was no stranger to conflict, either."

The California-based writer asserts that while Batman's individuality causes conflict, it also makes him a better Green Lantern in the field. "Somebody who was just sort of a company man and followed the company line all the time is someone you would want as an administrator," he comments, "but he's not necessarily the guy you want to throw in the frontlines, making his own decisions. You need a Dirty Harry in that way. He's a rogue cop who aggravates his superiors, but gets the job done."

Beyond *Batman: In Darkest Knight*, Barr is working on another Elseworlds graphic novel with artist Jerry Bingham. Following *Bride of the Demon* and *Son of the Demon*, *Reign of the Demon* again involves Ra's Al Ghul. It's due for late 1994 release. "I sold it to DC essentially by saying that it opens with Ra's Al Ghul having achieved his goal: He *is* the ruler of the world. He's a character I find endlessly fascinating. The question is: What part, if any, does Batman play in this world and what happens to our familiar cast of characters in this setting?"

Thinking about how the Elseworlds series allows different takes on established characters, Barr declares it an enjoyable format for writers. "It's fun to go back to the character's roots and play around with them. You can say, 'What if Bruce Wayne became Green Lantern?' or 'What if Ra's Al Ghul took over the world?' It *is* a good idea and they seem to be doing well."

There's no denying that the Dark Knight has been the subject for many of the Elseworlds projects, from being combined with Superman and Green Lantern to appearing in Victorian London and the Civil War. Barr offers an easy explanation for these other versions of Batman. "It's because his origin is the most simple," he states. "I was trying like hell to think up an Elseworlds for the Flash, but his origin is so complex that it's difficult to do anything with. With Batman, all you need to say is that he's a guy whose parents were murdered by criminals. You can put that in virtually any era or any facet of existence and go with it from there. It's a classic theme of wanting to punish evil. Waiting to run super-fast is not."

Mike W. Barr has other ideas for Batman adventures and says there's still plenty of life left in the character. "I'm working on a story with Batman in the French Revolution. So, essentially, it's the Scarlet Pimpernel, and Batman was derived from that character to some extent. There's lots of energy left in the basic character that hasn't been used yet. It's a really fun universe in which to play."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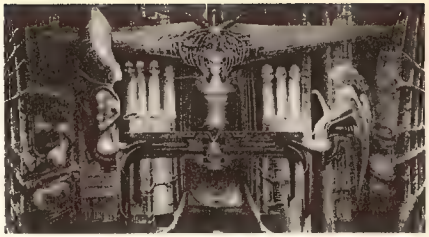

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# Death Wishes

***The Punisher really wants to die. After all, it's his anniversary.***

■

By HARLEY JEBENS

Art: Michael Golden

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Every issue of the regularly published trilogy of Marvel's Punisher comics line (*Punisher, Punisher War Journal* and *Punisher War Zone*) begins with the passage: "When mobsters slew his family, Frank Castle vowed to spend the rest of his life avenging them. Trained as a Marine, and equipped with a state-of-the-art arsenal, he now wages a one-man war on crime."

Well, thanks to the events of "Suicide Run," a 10-part crossover that unfolds in the pages of *Punisher* #86-88, *Punisher War Journal* #61-64 and *Punisher War Zone* #23-25, that passage may have to be amended slightly. At least for a while.

"This is the 20th anniversary of the Punisher," says Don Daley, the editor of the three *Punisher* titles. "Frank Castle first appeared in *Spider-Man* #129, February 1974. When someone pointed that fact out, everyone was in shock. We couldn't believe that the Punisher had been around that long, because the Punisher is someone without powers—except for the innate ability to know the guilt or innocence of a person; the Punisher has *never* killed an innocent person. All it would take is for one bullet, one ricochet, to hit him, and the Punisher would be dead. That got us thinking..."

With Daley and Punisher scribes Steven Grant, Chuck Dixon and Larry Hama collaborating on an interlinking storyline, you can bet their brainstorming session resulted in an explosive situation for Frank Castle.

Art: Gary Amaparez

**Going after the entire mob may be suicide, but Frank Castle sees no other way**

Daley says, "Castle is single-minded in the waging of his war on crime, and we started to wonder if a situation could arise where the Punisher's death would be of more strategic value to him than his life. In some sense, the Punisher already has a death wish. Death for him would be an emotional release; he gets to join his family. And this storyline *is* the Punisher's suicide run. He does something that he considers suicidal, and he goes into it thinking he *won't* survive."

Hama, who is scripting the *Punisher War Zone* leg of the "Suicide Run" triangle, with artwork provided by comics legend John Buscema, says, "Don, Steve, Chuck and I sat down in a single room and worked things out. Basically, we batted around ideas until things started to gel. When you get three guys together, who write the same character and set up an interchange of ideas, you get permutations and fresh ideas that wouldn't arise if you were sitting at home by yourself.

"It was a weird challenge," says Hama, "writing this way, where you would write one chapter and then turn over the next chapter to another writer. At the story's beginning, you're handed a puzzle. You have to get the character

LIGHTS COME UP
BRIGHT PAIN THROUGH THE STAR-LITES.
UNH!
I GUESS YOU'RE WONDERING WHY WE CALLED YOU HERE, MR. CASTLE.
WELL, THE REASON WE CALLED THIS MEETING IS YOU.
DON'T YOU FEEL HONORED?

Art: Gary Kwapisz

**Walking into the trap as planned, the Punisher looks death in the face and walks right alongside him.**

out of that puzzle, and then leave, hopefully, a worse puzzle for the next guy to get the Punisher out of.

"The thread that was handed to me was that the Punisher walks into this building wired to a dead man's switch, hooked up to explosives that are ready to blow. When I'm finished with the story and hand off to the next guy, the Punisher has faced the bad guys and then blown the building up.

"I think this is a valid way of getting the creative juices flowing," the writer says. "It feels like those old Saturday serials, where each chapter ends in a cliffhanger. You have to figure a way to get the character out of this situation logically without violating the system you've set up."

Daley says, "In the first issue of the 'Suicide Run' crossover, we learn that there's this big mob meeting. Of course, it turns out that they're planning how to kill the Punisher. But they're smart this time. They know that the Punisher tends to get wind of this sort of meeting. In fact, they've set it up so that he does. They're counting on his showing up. And that's where they're going to kill him. For Frank Castle, this is irresistible."

Taking the bait, Frank Castle attends the mob meeting and, in inimitable Punisher fashion, kills all but one of the top American mob personnel in attendance. Then, he blows up the building.

"The Punisher is presumed dead," Daley relates. "What happens then is that the media deifies him and all these Punisher wannabes start coming out of the woodwork."

And, oh, the Punishers there will be!

Lynn Michaels is a New York City police officer, who helped the Punisher track down a Central Park serial rapist in an old *Punisher War Zone* storyline, and has lent Frank Castle a hand since then from time to time in the books. "Lynn Michaels has quit the police force, because she's so disgusted with how the wheels of justice *don't* turn in America," Daley explains. Then, she turned vigilante. Upon hearing of Frank Castle's "death," Lynn feels compelled to take up the Punisher's mantle as her own.

Payback used to be a cop as well. He turned in some dirty cops, who retaliated by killing Payback's family. According to Daley, Payback had thought the Punisher responsible for the deaths. A truce was declared, and now Payback believes he can be the new Punisher.

Outlaw, a London motorcycle messenger, idolizes the Punisher. "He is perhaps the Punisher's number-one fan," Daley says. "When he hears that the Punisher has been killed, Outlaw comes to America either to find the Punisher alive or to avenge his death."

One might not think that a Mafia hit man would be likely to don the costume of the Punisher—though they would most certainly admire his arsenal—but that's exactly what Jimmy Pierce does. "Pierce came from a mob family," Daley says, "but he was always sort of the black sheep of that mob family. Now his family is asking

**Everyone thinks that the real Punisher is dead (and they may be right), but some have their own agenda when it comes to his legacy.**

AUTHORITIES HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THE SEARCH FOR THE REMAINS OF THE PUNISHER ACCOUNT TO BE BURIED UNDER TONS OF RUBBLE THAT WAS THE MANHATTAN TOWER.
AS I'LL BRING YOU UP TO DATE ON THE LOOSE ENDS HE'S RECEIVE THEM FROM NOW ON. THIS IS TESS-TI-FY!
THE PUNISHER IS DEAD! FINALLY!
ONCE YOUR PERCEPTION IS PERMANENTLY ALTERED WITHOUT YOUR CONSENT TO MAKE IT OFF!
—AND THE RECOGNITION OF YOUR SPIRITUAL SACRIFICE.
THEN SOME THINGS ARE REALLY WORTH IT.

Design & Layout: Calvin Lee

THEY HAVEN'T PLASTIC THEY WON'T JUST WON'T CHANGE SOMEONE BEING ALIVE
THIS BLOOD AIN'T TIME
IN THE END, WHEN THE FEEDING IN MY LIFE IS DONE
NO LEVERAGE
I CAN DO THIS
I SPEAK CRIME
I WIN

Art: Hugh Haynes/Mark McKenna

**Is he or isn't he? Will Castle return or will the Punisher be a new but familiar face?**

him to become the new Punisher and kill off their competition, dressed in a Punisher suit, keeping to the shadows so that no one knows that it's not Frank Castle."

Dean Swaybrick is another aspirant to Frank Castle's bloody legacy. Daley says, "Swaybrick is a cold, callous individual who basically lives for money and power. He's going to have a very hi-tech Punisher suit and attempt to manipulate the Punisher persona for his own financial and political gain."

Dr. Cord is a scientist who, in the recent *Punisher War Zone* annual, invented a suit of armor that disperses the impact of any projectile used against it, a suit of armor he wears as Phalanx. When Cord found that he was creating the suit for the highest-bidding criminal instead of the peace-minded government as he thought, he betrayed his backers and now finds himself a man on the run, with a price on his head. "He will surface late in the storyline as a sort of monkey wrench," Daley says. "I think people will be surprised that he shows up that late, which will throw the spotlight on him as a possible new Punisher.

"Shotgun was originally a Daredevil character, but is now a Punisher character. Shotgun will show up late [in the "Suicide Run" storyline]. What's interesting about him is that he doesn't seem to have the moral veneer of the Punisher. He's very 'What's in it for me?' He's like a '90s version of Luke Cage in some ways, although much more hi-tech and brutal."

Then there's the character that the *Punisher* team refers to as "the Idiot Punisher." Daley explains, "I don't think that anyone is really going to believe that the Idiot Punisher is a viable contender to be the new Punisher. But, we're just trying to make the point that this is not something to be emulated. The Punisher lifestyle, if you will, is dangerous and depressing. So, what we do is take a guy, who sits in front of his TV all day drinking while loading and unloading his pistol. He responds to the media's question, 'Now that the Punisher is dead, will a new Punisher show up?' And he says, 'Yeah. Why not me?' He goes out. And he's going to get his ass shot off on his first mission.

"What we're attempting to do here is mix the message a little. I think, to our target audience, we almost implicitly endorse the vigilante lifestyle. We want to say, 'Hey, there are costs to this.' We don't want to recommend it to anybody. We're dealing with issues of idolatry and role models. I'm perpetually asked at conventions, 'Is the Punisher a role model. Is he a hero?' So we wanted to deal with that."

**One of the many potential Punishers is Jimmy Pierce, a mob outcast who's given a new lease on life with a new identity.**

BUT THE PUNISHER NAME THE PUNISHER LOOK-- THEY STILL CARRY WEIGHT! FOR EXTORTION-- PROTECTION-- YOU NAME IT.
I WANT MY OWN PUNISHER J.WAY!
AND THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN--

Art: Hugh Haynes/Mark McKenna

The "Suicide Run" storyline will also attempt to answer the people who claim that Frank Castle has recently gotten soft, with a resounding shout of "*No, he hasn't!*" Daley says, "There is going to be some attrition. We are going to have deaths of major characters in the Punisher books. There will be long-term, *permanent* consequences of this storyline. We have all these characters running around—Jigsaw, Rosalie Carbone, Thorn, Micro (and all the replacement Punishers)—and what we're attempting to do is say, 'The Punisher has been around 20 years in a comic that's allegedly realistic. How realistic is it that this man could survive this long? Well, maybe it isn't.' All it takes is one ricochet, or one grenade or one head shot and this guy is down and out. The same is probably even more true of some of the book's supporting characters. So, we'll be killing some of those characters as a way of saying to the reader, 'This is a reality-based book. There *are* consequences to these characters' actions.

Art: John Buscema

**Writer Larry Hama explains the Big Bang theory Punisher-style.**

"We wanted to do a big event. Partly for the 20th anniversary—that is how this whole discussion came about—but also because I think we have a great story here. This feeds directly into the aftermath of 'Suicide Run,' a story called 'Pariah.' The person who will be the Punisher at the end of 'Suicide Run' is forced to deal with the Punisher's new status in the Marvel Universe as a pariah.

"There's a major change in the status quo for this Punisher," Daley continues. "This will be *unlike* the way the Punisher was handled previously in the Marvel Universe in that this Punisher will clearly, *clearly* be a bad, evil character in the eyes of everyone. For example, Daredevil, Spider-Man and Captain America, until this point, had disagreed with the Punisher's methods, but basically had shared the same goal—to stop crime. Now, they

will not only disagree, but they'll feel compelled to bring him down, because *this* Punisher is a killer; it seems that this Punisher doesn't discriminate between the innocent and guilty. It just seems that this Punisher is a psychopath on a homicidal spree.

"The 'Pariah' storyline will feed right into a storyline called 'Punisher: Final Entry,' which will be in the pages of *Punisher War Journal*, running through the end of 1994." Of that particular storyline, Daley will reveal nothing more, other than that it will be a "major event in Marvel continuity."

I'M WEARING LYNN MICHAELS' CLOTHES, BUT I'M LOSING AWAY
THAT'S MADNESS
MAYBE A LITTLE MORE MADNESS IS WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS
TAKE IT FRIVOLOUS
Art: Gary Kwapisz

**Lynn Michaels picks up the mantle of the Punisher after leaving the police force in search of true justice.**

Daley and the Punisher scripters also have in mind some post-"Suicide Run," post-"Pariah" stories. Some work by Chuck Dixon and John Buscema is planned for *Punisher War Zone*, and Dixon and Russ Heath are working on a four-issue story arc in *Punisher*.

"Later in the year on *War Zone*," explains Daley, "we'll have Chuck Dixon with Joe Kubert, doing a six-issue run in which we explore what has happened in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, particularly Yugoslavia. Since the Soviet Union broke up, there's no hard currency over there. A black market is thriving. We'll see what happens when the American Punisher—Frank Castle—meets his [ex-] Soviet equivalent, Dragunov.

"After 'Suicide Run,' Gary Kwapisz [who is illustrating the *Punisher War Journal* portions of "Suicide Run," written by Dixon] is going to do a beautiful bookshelf edition that Chuck Dixon has written. Gary has a style that very few Marvel fans have seen—it is absolutely, breathtakingly gorgeous."

Dixon has also written a Western, titled "A Man Named Frank," that takes the familiar Punisher motifs to a new era—the late 1880s. "It's about a peaceful farmer named Frank," Daley relates. "Some bad guys ride over the hill one day and are not very nice to Frank's farm, cattle, wife and kids. Frank's the only one left alive, and he sets out, for the remainder of this 64-page bookshelf, to even the score." John Buscema handles this story's pencils and inks.

Another Punisher bookshelf is purported to be the last Punisher Vietnam story. Don Lomax, who wrote Marvel's *The Nam* and Apple Comics' *Vietnam Journal*, writes this Frank Castle adventure, illustrated by Alberto Saichann, who has been called "the South American Michael Golden."

An upcoming *Punisher War Journal* annual will bring back the character of Thorn, Rosalie Carbone's uncle, from *Punisher War Zone*. Told (by Dixon) from Thorn's point-of-view, the story concerns an amnesiac Thorn, who has seen most of his family killed by the Punisher, and has been "shot, frozen and drowned by the Punisher," reveals Daley. "All that Thorn remembers is the Punisher's face and that he has to kill this guy. Thorn doesn't remember who he is. He doesn't remember his real name, Salvatore, or that he's related to Rosalie. Considering that he's amnesiac, and that he's also psychotic, it should be interesting." But to make it to all of these adventures, Frank Castle must first make it through "Suicide Run."

**The Punisher never had super-powers; he saw evil defeat good and fought against it.**

I DON'T THINK MARIE AND THE KIDS WOULD WANT THAT FOR YOU.
MARIE AND THE KIDS? JOHNNY'S GOT FAMILY?
NOT.
ANOTHER
WORD.
DO THE MATH, MICRO.
I'LL BE WORKING ON HOW TO GET INSIDE.
ANCIENT HISTORY.
Art: Gary Kwapisz

With three writers providing their own take on the Punisher—and on Frank Castle, since those names are no longer interchangeable—the characters who populate the Punisher world are insured of a wild ride.

According to the editor, there are three distinct perspectives on Frank Castle and the Punisher's worldview: "What Chuck Dixon brings to it is the sense of the Punisher not as a nice guy, but as sort of a creep. He's nasty to Micro. He's nasty to everybody. He's perpetually in a bad mood. He's a little bit psycho.

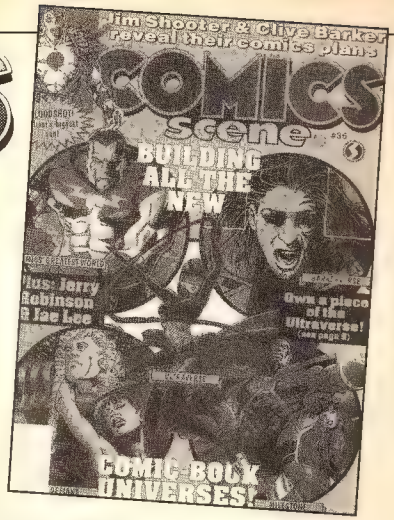
"When you're talking about the Punisher, it's hard not to mention Steve Grant, who really put the Punisher on the map with the Mike Zeck series early on. I think what Steve brings to it is this sense of a brooding, omnipotent Punisher. In a Steve Grant story, people's reactions to the Punisher are very extreme. And this helps to define the character. Also, he has this overall tone, almost a *film noir* kind of thing that I find very appealing.

"Hama, first of all, brings a sense of appreciation for the technical aspects of the Punisher's job and a maniacal kind of glee in terms of ballistics. Larry's always talking about massive trauma and wound cavities, and that sort of thing."

Hama says of his own interpreta-

*(continued on page 60)*

# COMICS scene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# Conroy

*(continued from page 41)*

She said she had an outtake reel she put together *[chuckles]* that she was taking home with her.

So, in this film, what do they name the girl friend? Andrea.

**CS:** In the film, both you and Mark Hamill play younger versions of your characters. How do you alter your voice for an earlier age?

**CONROY:** You can't make them too different where it's not believable for the same character. For example, young Bruce can only be a little different than mature Bruce. When I was 17, my voice had already changed. My voice wasn't quite as deep as it is now, but it was pretty deep, so when you're playing these characters in their 20s or in their teens, there's only so much that you can change your voice.

**CS:** How do you perceive Batman, personally and as a role model?

**CONROY:** The important thing to come out of this experience for me, and that I would want the audience to get out of it, is that out of Bruce Wayne's very dark experience, he makes a *positive* choice to change people for the better—to do something good, rather than feeling sorry for himself or doing something negative. He always does something positive. It's a great metaphor for people to use in their own lives. It's certainly one I try to use in my life: To always leave a situation better [after] you have encountered it.

That's why people get into Batman, because he's ennobling. He brings out the better parts of people. We would all like to do that, but for some reason we don't. If people just take the active choice and *do* it, everything would work out so much better.

After the troubles in South Central [Los Angeles] last year, I threw a broom in the car and went down and helped clean up. And there were all these people who had come from all over LA and Southern California. Everyone was there shoveling the debris and sweeping the streets, and we were interacting with the people living in that neighborhood. It was a bonding that should have happened *years* ago. It should happen every *day* in our lives. We should be a part of each other's lives. Why not?

It was just this *myth* of separation that people live through. It's me vs. them, or us and them. People don't understand that we are all in it together, it's the same thing. Every group, every town, every city—if you look at other people as not being different than you, but the *exact same*, just another aspect of you, then everything will work out better. And that's what Batman is about. CS

# Punisher

*(continued from page 58)*

tion, "My take on the Punisher is that he is *not* psychotic. The Punisher is so logical, in a way, that he is absolutely politically incorrect. To the Punisher, to be 'nice' means to suspend logic. The appeal of the Punisher is that he does what people *want* to do. He enacts our initial gut reaction—to react to situations violently, to exact revenge. When people do that, it is extremely emotionally and physically satisfying. Just because we live in societies in which individuals have to give up or suppress their instinctual urges for the good of the whole doesn't mean those urges and wants aren't there. They *are* there. And we know they are. The Punisher simply acts when others don't."

Art: John Buscema

The veteran Marvel scripter says, "I like to do characters that are over the edge. That's why I like to write characters like Sabretooth—he is one of the most over-the-edge characters in the Marvel Universe. Characters like Sabretooth and the Punisher are fun to write, because they are so in your face. When something is fun to write, you hope that it becomes fun to read as well."

Of course, everyone is remaining coy on the eventual fate of Frank Castle, the original Punisher. All Larry Hama will say on the subject is, "Killing a character off? What's the point of *that*?

"That whole idea conjures bad notions in my head. Most times that seems to be a last gasp; you don't have any other ideas, so you say, let's kill this guy." Don Daley says, "Frank Castle's ultimate fate really does have very much to do with the title of this storyline. He has gone on a mission in which he's willing to sacrifice himself. He does, ultimately, at the very end of the storyline, pay a very big price, perhaps the heaviest price that a man can pay." CS

# War

*(continued from page 46)*

vigilantes who kill everybody in their path. It's going to be a typical story, he's going to get involved in the typical way, and he's going to handle things in his Static fashion. That doesn't mean the world isn't going to be at stake, or that he won't be making major decisions; it just means that as a teenager, he'll make the decisions a teenager makes, and he's going to solve them in a teenage manner."

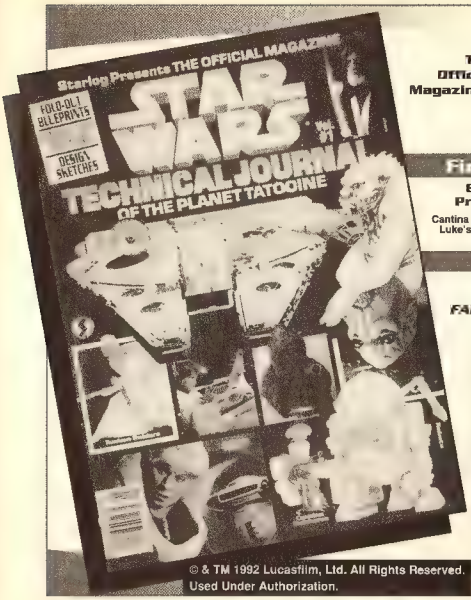
The *Shadow War* reaches its climax in *Shadow Cabinet* #0, as both the Shadow Cabinet and the Star Chamber finish recruiting new members, and both groups clash in an all-out battle that will reshape the Dakota Universe. As to which team will survive the final outcome, no one will say, but McDuffie points out that considering the book's title, most readers can figure it out.

To distinguish the *Shadow War* issues from the regular Milestone books, the covers—drawn by Walt Simonson—will be printed with a special UV gloss coat and spot-varnished with a fifth color-metallic ink. The "zero" issues of *Xombi* and *Shadow Cabinet* feature Milestone's new glossy paper, which McDuffie hopes will be a big hit with readers. "We took an old issue of *Static* that was already printed, and then printed it with this new process. The difference is astonishing. This will be a test of sorts to see if people want it."

Shortly after the *Shadow War*, *Xombi* and *Shadow Cabinet* will join the list of Milestone's monthly books, debuting in spring 1994.

As for the future, Milestone plans to expand their line slowly; their main concern is getting the books they're doing now to the newsstands on time. McDuffie notes, "There are so many universes, and so many places for freelancers to go, that it's extremely difficult to get people to commit to a monthly schedule, but we've found some really good creators who're interested in telling a story every month, and keeping that deal with the reader. We tell them we'll be back in 30 days for the next part of the story, and if they show up, we have to show up.

"We've been working very hard to do the best monthly superhero comic books, and right now we can do six monthly books at the same level we're working," says Dwayne McDuffie. "We can't do 10 right now. If the talent pool becomes available, and the infrastructure becomes available, and there's a market for it, we'll continue to expand, but it's going to be a slow building process. Our main priority right now is that our books stay good." CS

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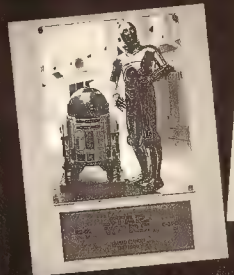

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# Shazam

*(continued from page 25)*

cheaper four-color process to Ordway's black-and-white art.

Research also ate away at the project's time, says Ordway, who referenced ancient Egypt for the book's prologue and, more extensively, the Art Deco period for Fawcett City. In this effort, he found a supporter in DC President Jenette Kahn, an Art Deco fan herself, who gave Ordway a book on Miami's restored deco section.

As far as the character designs go, Ordway stayed with the late '40s Cap, a little bulkier-looking than the 1941 version, modeled on then-film-star Fred MacMurray. It's not absolute Beck—"My art style is more realistic, I can't do C.C. Beck"—but you could certainly pick out Captain Marvel in a crowd. For variety's sake, Ordway retained the military-style flap on Captain Marvel's shirt, which an editor told Beck to ditch early on. Marvel's top also wrinkles, unlike today's Spandexy superhero outfits.

And then there's Cap's trademark cape, which on a good day looks like a baby blanket. To make the cape a bit more, well, *manly*, Ordway took a cue from Joe Quesada. "On one of last year's Eclipso annuals [*Action Comics Annual* #4], Joe did the appliqués on Captain Marvel's cape with squared-off edges," says Ordway. "I liked that so much I went back and changed some of the art I had done. The design looks less like flowers that way."

DC gave him free rein, Ordway says, but there was one shared understanding: Captain Marvel had to be prepped for the DC Universe.

"DC wants me to do a regular series after this," Ordway says. "If I do, I know going in I'll to have to do a company crossover, no matter how well the book sells. There's a lot of pressure to integrate Captain Marvel into the DC Universe.

"Once you do, the character can be borrowed out of the book at DC's discretion, which really used to bug me with Superman." Get too personal, too idiosyncratic with a character, and you're asking for trouble when others borrow him or her, Ordway says: "I want to make it easy for Captain Marvel to cross over, so that he can go into *Flash* without ruining my day."

This means that every decision that Ordway makes with Captain Marvel has repercussions down the road. A very whimsical approach, as in the Beck/Binder books, would mean the character wouldn't look kosher next to the DC entourage, except for maybe Ambush Bug. Cap seems to work best in the nostalgic '40s, but that aces out most of DC's heroes. However, in a noirish modern *Dark Cheese Returns*, what do you do with Tawky Tawny, Cap's tiger friend? Make him a man-eater in Armani?

"I've already heard people say I'm 'darkening' Captain Marvel," Ordway says. "Apparently, there were messages on CompuServe [a computer bulletin board] saying I'm doing a 'dark and gritty' version. I don't think so."

To make things worse, what do you do with the *Crisis* books, which eliminated Captain Marvel's reality altogether? "The scary thing is, *Crisis* was almost 10 years ago," says Ordway, who worked on the 12-issue series. "DC in some respects would like to forget it.

"At this year's San Diego Convention, Mike Carlin made a comment to a group of editors about trying to simplify the DC Universe. He got a big laugh—not with him, but at him. Continuity in the DC Universe is really a joke."

So ignore *Crisis*. Ordway is starting from scratch, with a middle-of-the-road Captain Marvel that he thinks can be a team player in the DC Universe, but who could still be the hero of all those great old Captain Marvel tales.

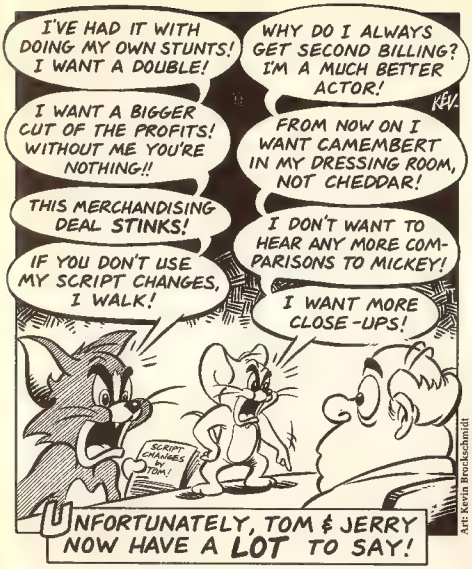
As for the time period, Ordway is good at fudging time for continuity's sake. "I can't tell you how many times I've drawn a *Daily Planet* newspaper without specifying the year," he chuckles.

"This isn't approved," he adds confidentially, "but I've suggested to Mike Carlin [who replaced Peterson as the book's editor when the latter left DC] that maybe Fawcett City is in the Midwest, and it's a place like Shangri-La, where time goes slowly. Maybe people age slowly too, which is why Billy Batson remains a kid. Maybe he's destined to be a kid forever."

Ordway has in mind a sort of mythical Mayberry, the Podunky home of TV's good-hearted Gomer Pyle, who kept the phrase "Shazam!" alive in the Marvel-less '60s. Not the kind of place you would find the Punisher, but then, Captain Marvel wouldn't even know how to work an Uzi. "Jerry would like heroes to be people you could actually look up to," says Peterson.

Will this be the approach that wins readers back to the Big Red Cheese? If not, look for Captain Marvel to return circa 1997 in a flattop and tattoos, leading a Family that looks more Manson than Marvel. If Ordway breaks the good captain's bad-luck streak, expect some weird and wonderful folks to invade the DC Universe.

"This book sets the stage for Tawky Tawny and Mary Marvel," Peterson says. "You don't see him, but we planned how we would get around to Captain Marvel Jr." Jerry Ordway smiles when he adds, "My challenge is to bring back Mr. Mind."


I'VE HAD IT WITH DOING MY OWN STUNTS! I WANT A DOUBLE!
WHY DO I ALWAYS GET SECOND BILLING? I'M A MUCH BETTER ACTOR!
KEV.
I WANT A BIGGER CUT OF THE PROFITS! WITHOUT ME YOU'RE NOTHING!!
FROM NOW ON I WANT CAMEMBERT IN MY DRESSING ROOM, NOT CHEDDAR!
THIS MERCHANDISING DEAL STINKS!
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE COMPARISONS TO MICKEY!
IF YOU DON'T USE MY SCRIPT CHANGES, I WALK!
I WANT MORE CLOSE-UPS!
SCRIPT CHANGES by TOM!
UNFORTUNATELY, TOM & JERRY NOW HAVE A LOT TO SAY!
Art: Kevin Brockschmidt

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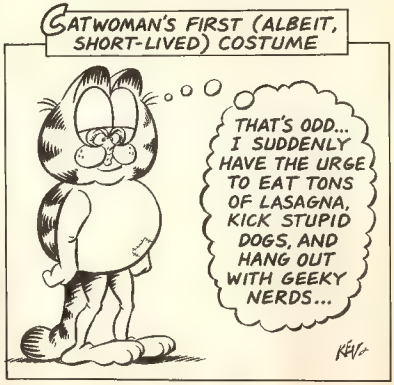
CATWOMAN'S FIRST (ALBEIT, SHORT-LIVED) COSTUME
THAT'S ODD... I SUDDENLY HAVE THE URGE TO EAT TONS OF LASAGNA, KICK STUPID DOGS, AND HANG OUT WITH GEEKY NERDS...
KEV.
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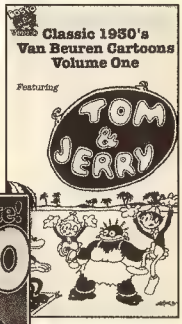

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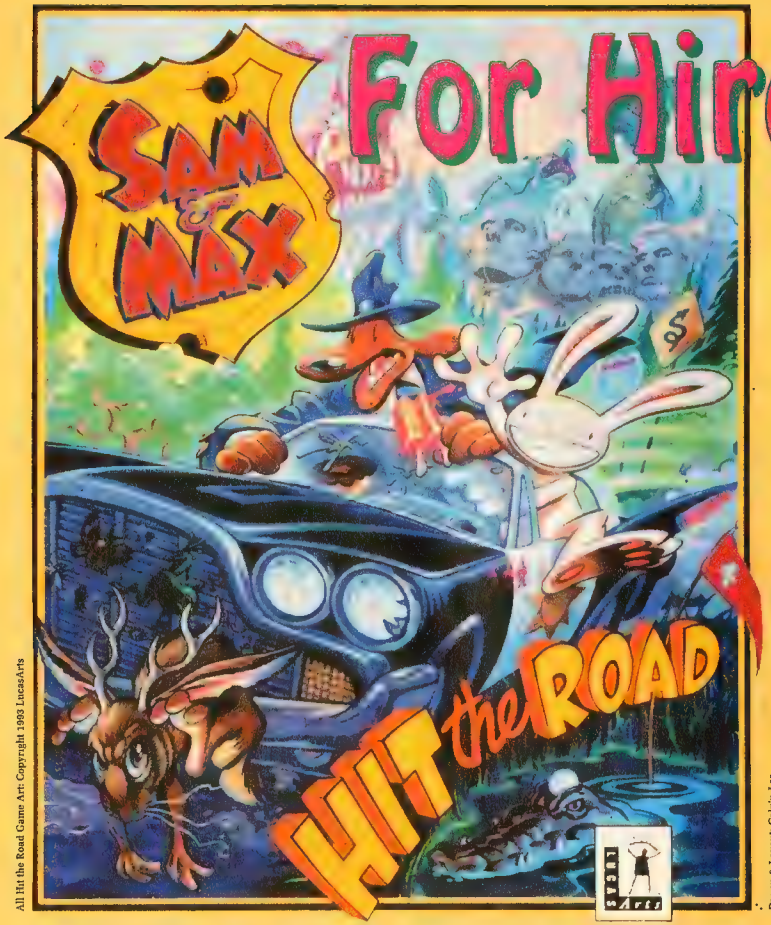



All Hit the Road Game Art: Copyright 1993 LucasArts

Design & Layout: Calvin Lee

## *Without ruffling any fur, the flatfoot mutt & his bunny pal play computer games.*

**By DARCY SULLIVAN**

You could do pretty good business running a bar that catered only to cartoonists whose work had been bastardized in other media. They would huddle and sulk, sobbing into their pitchers of Amstel Light and Yoo Hoo, cursing those evil Hollywood producers, toy-company moguls and other meanies who lured them with thousand-dollar bills and whispers of stardom. Open your doors to the folks whose creations were optioned, but never actually turned into *anything*, and you could be talking franchise.

But you wouldn't make a dime off Steve Purcell. This artist/writer is happy to report that his *Sam & Max* has made the leap from comics to computer games unscathed. Shoot, they've made it look easy.

Let's give these guys a round of applause—they earned it. OK, *now* you can ask: Who the hell are Sam & Max?

They're the cutest darn dog and bunny characters you've ever seen. They're so funny they give anthropomorphism a good name. They're so toylike they make merchandisers' eyes go ching! ching! like cash registers.

And they carry guns. *Big* guns. Do-you-feel-lucky-punk-size guns.

You see, Sam & Max are freelance

All Sam & Max Strip Art Steve Purcell

YOU KNOW, MAX, 96% OF ALL VIOLENT CRIMES ARE COMMITTED BY MONSTERS. I MEAN, I HAVE BE, EVEN JUST ABOUT IT MYSELF!
THEN I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD FIRST FIND AND DESTROY AS MANY MONSTERS AS POSSIBLE FROM NOW UNTIL THE END OF TIME, OR PUT UP WITH IT!
WELL, AMARIANA, I KNOW THERE'S A FISH-LIKE MONSTER AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE!
WELL, THAT'S JUST A NE PROBABLY WILL'S SO, RAI ABOUT AS MUCH WHITE WE BE DRIVING, NUMBSKU
LOOK OUT, SAM! HERE COMES A HIGH-VELOCITY PROJECTILE OF BRAIN-INSTALLATION APPARATUS!
THUP
MOMMY CAN I GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY TOOLS TO SCARE HUSTLIN SCUM
IT'S WASTE YOU BRAINS OF COURSE THAT WITH THE LOOK OF A SEARCH-LINE NOW COMIC CURRENTLY COMES AVARICE HOST OF COMPLEXITY
FIRST DAY AND THERE'S ALREADY A CRIME WAVE ON OUT OF SCHOOL
AND THEN, SEE, I'LL TUS SOLUTION
HE'S EVEN MORE ISOLATED AND ANTI-SOCIAL THAN MAYBE A BE AWARDING MEMBERS OF CRAVEN, PARANOID T
ARGGGH ZZZZ
DOES THE TERM ENTIRELY MEAN ANY
ME NOT SOLICITOUS OF THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS
GEE, I'M SLEEPY
GWEEP

police, and they solve crimes involving giant cockroaches, volcano gods, bootleg corndogs and demons in the cereal aisle. They also down improbable junk food, polish their comeback lines and mete out cruel and unusual punishment. Such as? Max: "We shaved their hair off and tattooed garish wrestling masks across their heads!"

Sam is the level-headed mutt who doesn't believe in warning shots. Max is the bunny. He's the one you have to watch out for. As Purcell puts it, "Sam has a conscience. Max doesn't."

Two dry-witted cartoon animals with a penchant for senseless violence, Sam & Max are sorta wholesome, sorta subversive, a combination that should have Ren and Stimpy looking over their shoulders. For the past six years, though, these well-armed furballs have been confined to a few comics stories, including four issues of *Sam & Max, Freelance Police*. Was their sales performance in comics a consideration for LucasArts Entertainment, which released the IBM-compatible "graphic adventure" game *Sam & Max Hit the Road* in November?

"Fortunately, no," says Purcell. He admits that, cult darlings though they are, Sam & Max have scarcely set the comics world on fire. Most of their tomfoolery has been published by small independent companies. Even their big jump to Marvel's Epic imprint was sabotaged. For reasons unfathomable to nonmarketers, Marvel polybagged *Sam & Max, Freelance Police* with the first issue of *Dirt*, a teen magazine for those who find *Thrasher* too intellectual.

"When they first told me about that deal, I thought, 'Great, everyone who wants to buy *Dirt* will have to buy *Sam & Max*!' " says Purcell. "In fact, what it meant was that anyone who wanted to buy *Sam & Max*, had to buy *Dirt*." To sweeten the pot, the *Dirt* bag also contained a sampler tape of pop/grunge bands, which was pretty much lost in the packaging. "My friend Mike Mignola didn't even see it," says Purcell. "He threw it in the garbage."

They may not be riding a wave of presold hype, but Purcell has faith in Sam & Max as they embark on their most perilous adventure ever, out of the four-color puddle and into the mainstream. "It doesn't really matter whether people know them from the comics," he says. "They're durable enough to make the transition."

Since only a tiny coterie of deranged fans would fume if LucasArts transformed Sam & Max into, oh, kickboxing mandrills, it may seem odd that they're getting the star treatment, guided by Purcell's creative control. After all, LucasArts, one of George Lucas' companies, is better known for licensing *really* big guns, like *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*.

But Purcell has an in with the company: He works for it. A LucasArts freelancer since 1988, Purcell has done background art and animation for the *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* graphic adventure and *Secret of Monkey Island*, as well as package cover art, every now and then.

With Purcell in the office, Sam & Max became the unofficial LucasArts mascots. Sam & Max comics and T-shirts tumbled around the company's offices in San Rafael, CA. The unruly twosome had cameos, often as inanimate objects (totem pole deities, a hand puppet) in *Secret of Monkey Island*, *Monkey Island II: LeChuck's Revenge*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. After awhile, game designers Sean Clark and Michael Stemmle started lobbying to do a full-fledged Sam & Max game.

In fact, the game guys weren't the first to consider peeling the trigger-happy hound and hare off the printed page. Purcell says he was courted by a couple of animation companies interested in a *Sam & Max* TV series. He was no stranger to the medium, having

**Sometimes get their own names mixed up—the easiest way to figure out who's who is "Sam has a conscience. Max doesn't" according to creator Steve Purcell.**

done character designs for Colossal Pictures' *The Completely Mental Misadventures of Ed Grimley*. But Purcell shooed animation offers away when he realized that, once a studio bought the rights to Sam & Max, it could nix projects like the video game.

And, unlike with a TV show, Purcell was sure he could keep creative control of Sam & Max once he licensed them to LucasArts. He designed the characters and locations for the game and "did as much animation as possible." That included making the flatfeet walk. "When I draw them, they're always a little off-balance," says Purcell. "I went through a few stages trying to get them to walk right."

Purcell also co-plotted the script for the graphic adventure, along with Clark, Stemmle and LucasArts' Colette

Sam & Max Strips: Trademark & Copyright 1991 Steve Purcell

**Putting together the *Hit the Road* fun are (from left to right) Sean Clark, *Sam & Max* creator Steve Purcell and Michael Stemmle.**

Michaud. You only have to enter Stemmle and Clark's rec room of an office—with its Death of Superman poster and mound of fully posable Marvel figurines—to know Purcell was in good hands. As they refined the game in October, the chemistry between Stemmle, Clark and Purcell was obviously copacetic, a word Max would bite you for using.

Stemmle starts up the game, which begins with an animated sequence in which Sam & Max actually talk. Everywhere else in the game, characters' speech is just written on the screen: space limitations confined talking to the beginning. "It's a 12-megabyte game on seven floppy disks," Stemmle explains. "It would take about 100 disks to do full voice. We'll do a CD-ROM version later, though, and that will have more talking."

"We put an ad in the *Hollywood Reporter* to find the voice artists," adds Purcell. "Bill Farmer does Sam as Jack Webb mixed with Johnny Carson mixed with something else. We picked Nick Jameson for Max—we wanted a Joe Pesci little-guy voice. We tried having a woman do Max's voice—hey, a woman does Bart Simpson's—but you were always hearing a *woman's* voice.

"What I liked about Bill and Nick was the way they delivered the lines. They weren't so overstated. Most people, when they do a voice for a cartoon, exaggerate. I had a guy come up to me at a comic convention and say, 'You know what Max should sound like?' And the guy goes..." Purcell, his eyes bugging, makes a manic choking sound, something like "QUAAGHK!"

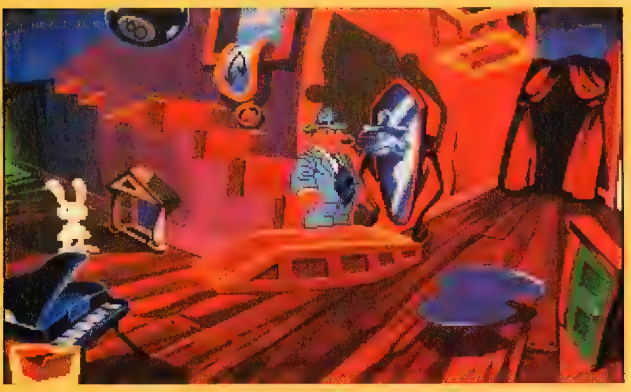
**Aimed more at adults, *Sam & Max Hit the Road* provides laughs and adventure right alongside Nietzsche references.**

SAM & MAX FREELANCE POLICE
TM & © 1991 by
STEVE PURCELL
LETTERED BY LOIS BUHALIS
FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT KALANI STREICHER
THAT WAS CLOSE! IMAGINE IT, MAX. WE WERE ACTUALLY BURIED ALIVE BY A HORDE BAND OF GASSY SMELLING PIRATES
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT THEY'D LOOT THE LOCAL LIQUOR STORE BUT LEAVE OUR VANS TO?
YEAH, BUT NOW I CAN ERASE ONE FROM MY 5 HANDSOME MONKEY SCALP
ARRR! IT'S A WASH!
YOU DON'T EVEN CARRY A WALLET
YOU, ARE A DRUG AND HATSUL DEAST
RUNNG
SAM AND MAX DRIVE. THE WAVES ARE ON OUR WAY!
NO TIME FOR UNCOMPREHENSIBLE YOU UNC LITLE BUDDY
LOOKS LIKE THE WEATHER'S TAKING A TURN FOR THE WORSE. I'LL BRING THE FAN BACK IN. WORLD WAR II GIRL, THE CAR KEYS!
WOOF!
WELL, TH SEEMS TO BE A LIKELY SPOT FOR HITLER'S MOUSTACHIO DESPOT TO MOUNT HIS DIABOLICAL THREATENING AND RIDICULOUS FLYING WEAPONS OF ALL TIME, OR UNTIL THE NEXT BATCH
HEY, SAM-DUG
OH, SUPER MARIO
SMTHOW, I DUGHN SHE WAS ALIEN SO I DIES BEE ZUS NUCH FRIENDLIEFUT? I MEAN... OKAY YOU BARBARIC MARAUDERS ALL THAT'S VILE AND DESTRUCTIVE, MY PAL MAX WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A PEACE TOP PEACE
COME ON MY H. IF ANYONE WOULD JUST TRY TO GET FALGING THEM WELL, MAYBE THEREBY THE MOST POWERFUL SUPERPOWER WILL CEASE TO START WARPING THE FOUNDATIONS BACK INTO SHAPE
ICH WERDE DICH MEHNEM HAUSCHAKAL OTTO FUTTERN
OH GOSH I DIDN'T MEAN TO KEEP YOU FROM DOING THAT
GRUNCH
WELL WE GOT THROUGH THAT WITH JUST A PINCH OF VIOLENCE. ALTHOUGH I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE MY BEST FRIEND PUT HIS MOUTH ON HITLER'S HEAD
HELPER JUST LIKE CHICKEN!
BUT YOU KNOW? I HAVE THE CREEPY FEELING WE MAY HAVE INDELIBLY STAINED THE SENSITIVE PSYCHE OF THIS CHILD
PBTHHHH!
SHHH! YOU BUSY ME UP, LITTLE PAL

The game starts when Sam & Max are dispatched on a cross-country road trip to find a missing Bigfoot and his girl friend, Trixie the Giraffe-Necked Woman. Along the way, they tour every god-forsaken tourist attraction, including the World's Largest Ball of Twine, the Celebrity Vegetable Museum and Bumpusville, a country music theme park that makes real-life Twitty City look like the Smithsonian. Players have to solve puzzles, collect inventory items and navigate strange scenarios. You control Sam via a mouse; the cursor changes into things like walking fingers and an eyeball, depending on what you want Sam to do. As usual, nobody controls Max.

Manning the mouse, Stemmle hot-foots the pair to the Mystery Vortex, in which the laws of physics go all wonky. "We're all in agreement that this is the coolest spot," says Clark, watching Sam get smaller as he approaches the foreground. Bowing to his colleagues' feverish requests, Stemmle moves to the "activity pages," beginning with Wak-a-Rat, where Sam, under Stemmle's direction, tries to bash rats with a mallet. Every few hits, Stemmle gives Max a wallop or two, just to keep him in line.

**"We're in agreement that this is the coolest spot," says game designer Sean Clark of the Mystery Vortex.**



For Peter Chan, who did the backgrounds for the game's 80 "rooms" (separate locales), the project was more challenging than his last outing, *Day of the Tentacle*. "I had to imitate Steve's art," says Chan. "I spent a couple of days just trying to pick up his style."

Chan too delights in touring visitors through his part of *Sam & Max Hit the Road*, several dozen computer files of backgrounds. "Let me show you inside the president's nostril," he offers, calling up part of the Dino Bungee National Memorial. This, in case you were wondering, is where kids bungee-jump out of Mount Rushmore's stone noses, chat with mechanical dinosaurs and get stuck on a tar pit slide.

All this could have come straight from the comics, but not everything made the transition verbatim. Stuckey's, the omnipresent food store/rest stop of America's highways, is called Snuckey's in *Sam & Max Hit the Road*, though it went by its real name in the comics. "Comics are such an obscure market that you can get away with stuff like that," Purcell says.

More importantly, Sam & Max aren't packin' heat. Purcell says it wasn't worries about a parental backlash that deprived our heroes of their trademark firearms, but the way gamers utilize objects.

"If they had guns, players would try to use them to solve every puzzle," Purcell explains. "They would shoot every character they saw. That would get tiresome. But as a reward, if you play through the game, during the credits Sam & Max are in a shooting gallery and you can shoot everything in sight."

Lest anyone get the wrong idea, Sue Seserman, head of public relations for LucasArts, explains that *Sam & Max* is targeted mainly at adults. "The game looks like a cartoon, but it's not for little kids," she insists.

Stemmle can't take this discussion seriously. "Kids *might* enjoy the game," he notes, "but the Nietzsche references would be completely lost."

"Ah, kids love Nietzsche references," adds Purcell.

With its full-screen graphics, jazzy musical score and "pop-up icon interfaces" (technobabble for the way the mouse controls the action), *Sam & Max Hit the Road* is pretty fancy stuff. It's certainly leap

years ahead of the characters' beginnings on a little boy's drawing pad. Oddly enough, that boy wasn't Steve Purcell, but his little brother Dave.

The way Purcell remembers it, Dave drew Sam and Max, and would leave his comics lying unfinished around the house. Steve would tease him by completing them, making fun of Dave's little-kid art and stories. The elder Purcell retained some of this humor when he started drawing the characters professionally in 1987: Sam & Max still occasionally get their own names mixed up, and screw up the narrative, as when Sam says, "I can't think of anything to say in this panel. Take care of him, Max."

"I made up the Freelance Police part," Purcell says. "The only reason I'm willing to admit that my brother invented them is because I've changed them so much."

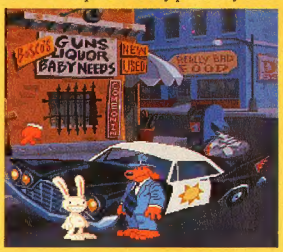
Even if the game hits bigger than the comics—virtually a sure thing—Steve isn't worried about Dave phoning up for his royalties. "When I was 13, he signed a little document that says, 'I will not draw Sam and Max anymore. You can draw them,' " says Purcell. How old was Dave when he ceded these two potential moneymakers to his big brother? "He was seven," Purcell says, a mite sheepishly.

This is the perfect origin story for Sam & Max, two lovable sociopaths whose repartee smacks of the brotherly josh. Their super-duper videotronic road trip also has its roots in Purcell's childhood.

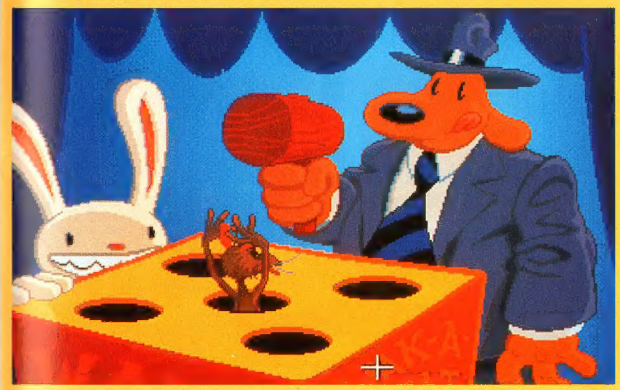
"When I was a kid, we traveled across country by car a couple of times," he says. "We passed all these cheesy road stops, with me begging Dad to stop. He only stopped at a fraction of the places I wanted." The best of these, Purcell says, was Dinosaur National Monument in Utah, undoubtedly an inspiration for Dino Bungee National Memorial.

PLENTY OF PARKING— THAT'S WHAT I LOVE ABOUT MOST MAJOR LOST CITIES!
WELL, HERE WE ARE IN THE LOST CITY OF ATLANTIS!
WHY ARE YOU DRESSED LIKE THAT, SAM?
I GUESS I'M FEELING ALL ADVENTUROUS!
WOW, SAM, YOU SOUND LIKE SOME CLAMMY OLD THESPIAN.
REALLY? I DON'T REMEMBER EVER DATING WITHIN MY GENDER.
GREETINGS, MY FRIENDS.
WELCOME TO ATLANTIS A LITTLE BIT FLAT TIRE AND FRIENDLY
MMMORYA KNOWS A TALKING SEAHORSE MAN!
I AM BATHESPHERE—HIGH PRIEST OF ATLANTIS.
SAM, DO YOU KNOW THAT THE MALE SEAHORSE CARRIES THE YOUNG UNTIL THEY BLOSSOM FORTH FROM HIS BELLY AS FULLY GROWN, AND HOW OF MYSELF—ALL IN TIME TO MAKE THE HAIR STAND ON END?
AS YOU CAN SEE, THE GREAT BEAUTY OF OUR CLOSED DOMES ENHANCES OUR MOIST LIFESTYLE.
SAM, HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A PREGNANT SURINAM TOAD? BARF!
SHUT UP, MAX.
BUT ALAS, THE CATASTROPHE CAST-OFF'S FROM YOUR WORLD ARE TOO MUCH FOR THE IMMENSE SERENITY OF OUR WAY OF LIFE!
WE CALL'EM
I CAN SEE LIGHT RIGHT THROUGH HIS HEAD.
YOU MUST CONVEY THE MESSAGE TO THE SURFACE WORLD LEST WE PERISH AND PERISH.
WE'LL DO IT IF YOU PRESS US!
TUNA CASSEROLE ALWAYS TASTES BETTER EATEN ON-SITE.
THESE AREN'T DEAD!
WELL, TIME TO CONVEY OUR SIGNIFICANT MESSAGE!
PEOPLE OF THE EARTH! STOP THROWING YOUR OBSOLETE CRAP INTO OUR PRECIOUS OCEAN!
REMEMBER— DISCARDED PLASTIC AND ALUMINUM FOIL AND CONTAINERS CAN BE A DEADLY MENACE TO AFFORDABLE CARS, OR THE KINETTES!
AND HALO BARNHOLE COULD BE WORTH BIG MONEY SOMEDAY IF WE CONSIDERIT A "COLLECTIBLE."
SO, HOW WAS THAT?
NEVER MIND.

**Across the world and away they go, Sam & Max run rampant over any place they can.**




**Wak-a-Rat gives game players some carnival fun as well as an opportunity to keep the uncontrollable Max in line.**



The road trip was also featured in Purcell's full-length story for the comic *Sam & Max, Freelance Police*. This was the Comico version (1989), which followed the Fishwrap version (1987) and preceded the *Dirt*-burdened Epic version (1992). Epic nearly redeemed itself with the Special Color Collection, which reprinted early stories from *Critters* and *Grimjack* and included new material. The only Sam & Max strips Purcell does these days appear in *The Adventurer*, LucasArts' promo periodical (reprinted here).

One can only hope that *Sam & Max Hit the Road*, distributed in comics stores as well as game outlets, will incite demand for more comics. Otherwise, nongamers who would rather *read* than *play* Sam & Max may have a long wait ahead, as Purcell's not sure what project he'll do next. He nearly inked a contract some time ago with Marvel for a three-book series, *The Sam & Max Show*, but opted to work on the game instead. Nevertheless, *Wizard* listed the three nonexistent books for awhile in its price guide, "the most accurate listing for comic books available in the market today."

What's more, Steve Purcell swears he saw a price guide that actually raised the value of *Sam & Max Show* #1 to $3.25. "Maybe I'll wait until it's really valuable," he says, "and then I'll do it." CS

# COMICS screen

# COMICS REPORTER

All of these upcoming projects are live-action unless specified. Those boxed are new or updated since last listing. **Not everything listed will ultimately ever be made.** S: script; D: director; P: producer; EP: executive producer; C: creator; AN: animated; LA: live-action; Syn: syndicated; HB: Hanna-Barbera; Nel: Nelvana; WD: Disney; WB: Warner Bros.; PP: Paramount; U: Universal; Col: Columbia; Am: Amblin; DH: Dark Horse; L: Largo. **Attn. all pros:** Info to be added to this list is cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016. (Info as of 11/5/93)

**The Airtight Garage.** AN.

**Alfred E. Neuman.** Film. P: Steven Haft, QDE.

**Alias.** Film. U. S: David S. Goyer. P: P. Lenkov, S. Daniel.

**ALIENS vs. Predator.** Film. DH/Fox.

**Annie.** Film. Rastar.

**Archie.** LA Film. DIC.

**Barbarella.** LA film. Nel.

❑ **Batman.** AN film. X-mas. (see article) LA sequel. D: Joel Schumacher. S: Lee & Janet Batchler.

❑ **Betty Boop.** AN film. S: Jerry Rees. EP: R. Fleischer, R. Zanuck. Seeks studio.

**Black Panther.** Film. W/Wesley Snipes. Sony.

**Blade.** Film.

**Blankman.** Film. C: Damon Wayans, Eric Gold. D: Mike Binder. Sony.

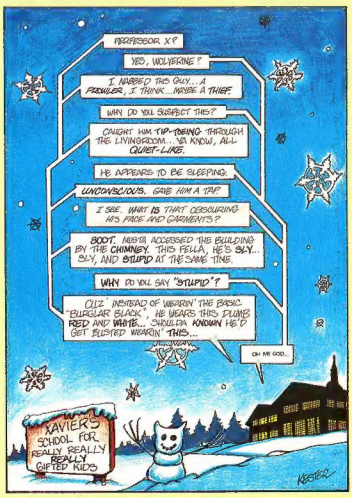
**Blondie.** Film. WB.

**Broom Hilda.** Film. P: Ernest Chambers.

**Cadillacs & Dinosaurs.** AN series. Nel. CBS.

Pagemaster Art: Copyright 1993 20th Century Fox

**Macaulay Culkin visits the world of literature in 1994's live-action/animated *Pagemaster*.**


PROFESSOR X?
YES, WOLVERINE?
I NABBED THIS GUY... A PROWLER, I THINK... MADE A THIEF.
WHY DO YOU SUSPECT THIS?
CAUGHT HIM TIP-TOEING THROUGH THE LIVINGROOM... YA KNOW, ALL QUIET-LIKE.
HE APPEARS TO BE SLEEPING.
UNCONSCIOUS. GIVE HIM A TAP.
I SEE. WHAT IS THAT CONCEALING HIS FACE AND GARMENTS?
BOOT. MUST'A ACCESSED THE BUILDING BY THE CHIMNEY. THIS FELLA, HE'S SLY... SLY, AND STUPID AT THE SAME TIME.
WHY DO YOU SAY "STUPID"?
CUZ INSTEAD OF WEARIN' THE BASIC BURGLAR BLACK, HE WEARS THIS PLUMB RED AND WHITE... SHOULDA KNOWN HE'D GET BUSTED WEARIN' THIS...
OH MY GOD.
XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR REALLY REALLY REALLY GIFTED KIDS
KESTER

Art: James D. Kester

❑ **Double Dragon.** Film.

**Elektra Assassin.** Film.

❑ **Fat Albert.** LA film. P: Bill Cosby.

**Faust.** Film. D: Stuart Gordon. S: David Quinn.

**Flaming Carrot.** Film.

**The Flintstones.** Film. Fred: John Goodman. Barney: Rick Moranis. U/Am. D: Brian Levant. Summer '94.

**Ghost Rider.** Film.

**The Green Falcon.** TV. Am.

**The Green Hornet.** Film. S: Chuck Pfarrer. U.

❑ **Hate.** Film. S: Peter Bagge. Colossal Pictures.

**Incredible Hulk.** Film. U.

**Inspector Gadget.** LA film. S: J. Loeb III, M. Weisman. AN special. NBC. X-Mas. U.

❑ **Judge Dredd.** Film. Sylvester Stallone. S: Bill Wisher. D: Danny Cannon. To film February.

**Kull.** Film. U. S: C. Pogue.

**The Land Before Time.** AN sequels. Direct to video.

**The Lion King.** AN film. WD.

**Mai the Psychic Girl.** Film.

**Mantis.** Fox TV. U. EP: Sam Raimi, Sam Hamm. W/Carl Lumbly. For mid-season.

❑ **The Mask.** Film. New Line. S/D: Chuck Russell. W/ Jim Carrey, Richard Jeni. Shooting.

**The Men in Black.** Film. Col. P: W. Parkes, L. McDonald.

**Mr. Magoo.** Film. Am/WB.

**Pagemaster.** AN/LA film. D: Joe Johnston. W/Macaulay Culkin, Christopher Lloyd. Fox/HB. X-Mas 1994.

**Peanuts.** LA film. P/S: John Hughes. WB.

❑ **The Phantom.** Film. PP. AN series. Hearst Ent. Voices: Scott Valentine, Margot Kidder.

**Plastic Man.** Film. WB/Am. S: L. Wilson. D: Bryan Spicer.

**Pocahontas.** AN film. WD. X-Mas 1995.

**Prince Valiant.** AN series. Family Chan. LA film. S: M. Beckner, Roger Kumble, Marlene King. N. Constantin.

**The Pulse.** Film. C: Todd McFarlane. QDE.

**Red Sonja.** TV. Lancit.

**Reid Fleming.** Film. WB.

❑ **Richie Rich.** Film. P: J. Silver, J. Davis. D: Don Petrie. S: Jim Jennewein, Tom Parker.

**The Saint.** Film. PP.

**Sandman.** Film.

**Sgt. Rock.** Film. P: Joel Silver. S: John Milius. WB.

❑ **The Shadow.** Film. S: David Koepp. P: Martin Bregman. D: Russell Mulcahy. W/Alec Baldwin (see article)

**Sheena.** TV series. P: Paul Aratow. Col.

**Sin City.** S: Frank Miller.

**Speed Racer.** Film. D: Patrick Read Johnson. S: J.F. Lawton. WB.

**The She-Hulk.** TV project.

**Spawn.** Promo film.

**Spider-Man.** AN TV mini-series. Fox. Daily TV series later. LA Film. S: Jim Cameron (D), Neil Ruttenberg. Summer '95.

**Spy vs. Spy.** Film. P: Steven Tisch, QDE.

**Starwatcher.** AN film. PP.

**Stealth Force.** Film. Kandoo.

**Superman.** TV series. ABC.

**Tales from the Crypt.** HBO.

**Terry & the Pirates.** TV.

**The Tick.** AN TV mini-series. Fox. Sunbow.

❑ **Time Cop.** Film. D: Peter Hyams. S: Mark Verheiden. DH/L. U. W/Jean-Claude Van Damme. Shooting.

**Trouble with Girls.** Film. Fox. S: W. Jacobs, G. Jones.

❑ **Virus.** Film. S: Chuck Pfarrer. P: Gale Anne Hurd. U.

**Wolff & Byrd. TV.** Lorimar. P: Joel Simon, Bill Todman Jr. EP/D: Joe Dante. Fox.

**Wonder Woman.** AN TV.

**X-Men.** LA film. Fox.

❑ **Youngblood.** AN series presentation. Roustabout Prod.

**Zen.** Film. AN series.

**Zorro.** Film. S: J. Randal Johnson, Joel Gross. D: Mikael Salomon. TriStar. AN TV series. Imagination F. Calico.

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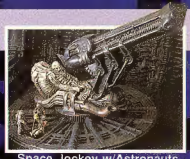
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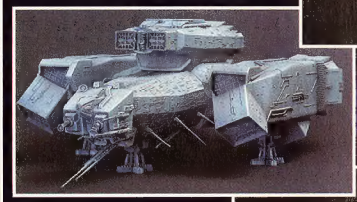
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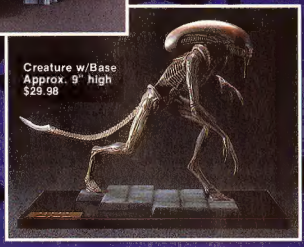
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Simpsons 2 (**New!**) ..... 2.25/**1.75**

# DARK HORSE

Reg. / Sale

Aliens: Music of Spears 1 . 2.50/**1.95**
Aliens vs. Predator II #4 .... 2.50/**1.95**
Predator Bad Blood 1,2 .... 2.50/**1.95**
Robocop: Roulette 1 (**New!**) 2.50/**1.95**
Star Wars: Tales Jedi 4 .... 2.50/**1.95**
X #1 (All new series) ..... 2.00/**1.75**

# DC COMICS

Reg./Sale

Batman 505(Knightquest) 1.50/**1.25**
Detective 672 (vs. Joker) . 1.50/**1.25**
Green Lantern 50 (48 pg) 2.95/**2.50**
Legends World's Finest 1 . 4.95/**3.95**
Power of Shazam HC ..... $20/**16.95**
Robin 5 (vs. Cluemaster) . 1.50/**1.25**
Steel 1,2 (**New!**) ..... 1.50/**1.25**
Superboy 1,2 (**New!**) ..... 1.50/**1.25**
Supergirl 1,2 (**New!**) ..... 1.50/**1.25**

# Order by January 6th & Get for *Free:*

**1** Full color X-Men Poster! **1** Limited Edition Uncut sheet of Fleer X-Men Cards!

## X-MEN 30

Featuring the marriage of Cyclops & Marvel Girl and containing 3 exclusive X-Men Fleer Ultra cards, **X-Men #30** and **Uncanny X-Men #310** will be red hot! **Recommended!**

**Excalibur 75** (Holo-grafx Foil cover - **Reg $2.75**) ..... **2.25**
Ties-in to X-Men #30! Features the return of Captain Britain! 48 pages!
**Uncanny X-Men 310** (Includes 3 Fleer Ultra X-Men cards - **Reg $1.95**) **1.50**
Ties-in directly to X-Men #30! Contains 3 exclusive X-Men Fleer Ultra cards!
**X-Men 30** (Includes 3 Fleer Ultra X-Men cards - **Reg $1.95**) ..... **1.50**
The wedding of Cyclops & Marvel Girl! Contains 3 exclusive X-Men Fleer cards!
**X-Men Wedding Magazine** (Exclusive articles & art - **Reg $3.95**) .. **3.50**

Reg. /Sale

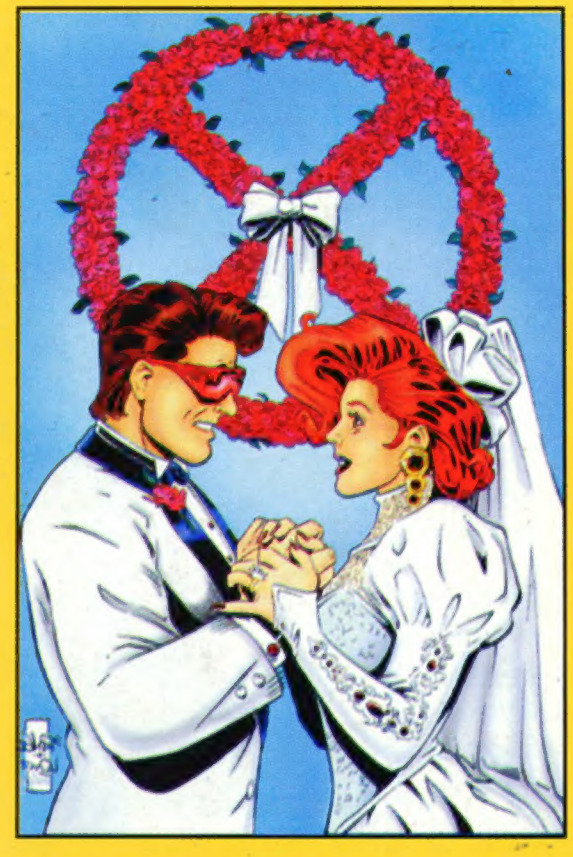
**Alpha Flight 130** (48 pgs) 2.25/**1.75**
Last issue as many characters die!
**Cable 9** (vs. Omega Red) 2.00/**1.75**
**Marvel Comics 149,150** 1.50/**1.25**
Wolverine vs. Typhoid Mary Part 1-8!
**New Warriors 45** (X-Force) 1.25/ **.99**
The X-Force vs. New Warriors Pt 2!
**What If? 59** (Wolverine) . 1.25/ **.99**
What if Wolverine led Alpha Flight?
**Wolverine 79** (vs. Cyber!) 1.75/**1.50**
**Wolverine Blood Hungry** . 6.95/**5.95**
Wolverine vs. Cyber by Sam Kieth!
One of the best Wolvie stories ever!

Reg. /Sale

**X-Factor 100** (Foil cover) . 2.95/**2.50**
★ Order 3 or more (each) ... **1.95**
Death of a major character! 48 pgs!
**X-Force 32** (New Warriors) 1.25/ **.99**
The X-Force vs. New Warriors Pt 1!
**X-Men 2099 #6** (New!) ... 1.25/ **.99**
**X-Men Adventures II #1,2** 1.25/ **.99**
All new! Ties into the wedding! Hot!
**X-Men Adventures Trade** .. 4.95/**3.95**
Contains X-Men Adventures #1-4!
**X-Men T-Shirt** (Jim Lee - L or XL) **13.95**
**X-Men Unlimited 4** (64 pgs) $4/**3.50**
Mystique, Nightcrawler & Rogue!

### X-Men Fleer Ultra Cards Series I

Featuring gold foil stamping & two-sided UV coating, Fleer's new Ultra X-Men cards will be hot! Contains 150 cards by top artists plus 2 rare bonus cards!
**X-Men Fleer Ultra Cards** (Pack) **$1.50** **X-Men Fleer Ultra** (Box - Lim 1) **$52.95**



# ETM™ Top 10 Picks!

Reg./ Sale

**1 Beavis & Butt-Head #1** (New!) . 1.95/**1.75**
★ **Special** - Order 3 or more (each) .... **1.50**
New from Marvel in the tradition of Ren & Stimpy!
**2 Bloodshot #0** (Chromium cover) 3.50/**2.95**
At last, the origin of Bloodshot! Chromium cover!
**3 Breed #1** (Jim Starlin art) ..... 2.50/**1.95**
Origin of new superhero by Jim Starlin! Hot!
**4 Daredevil #326** (New Daredevil) 1.25/ **.99**
A new Daredevil begins a new story! Red hot!
**5 Force Works #1** (Pop-up cover) 3.50/**2.95**
★ **Special** - Order 3 or more (each) .... **2.50**
New team! Includes Iron Man, USAgent & more!

Reg./ Sale

**6 Green Lantern #50** (48 pages) 2.95/**2.50**
★ **Special** - Order 3 or more (each) ... **1.95**
Death of a major character! Glow-in-dark cover!
**7 Punisher #88** (Death!!!) ..... 1.25/ **.99**
A very, very major character dies in this issue!!!
**8 Rune #1** (Barry Windsor-Smith) 1.95/**1.75**
★ **Special** - Order 3 or more (each) ... **1.50**
All new monthly title! Barry Windsor Smith art!
**9 Shadowman #0** (Origin!) ..... 3.50/**2.95**
The origin of Shadowman! Chromium cover!
**10 X-Men #30** (Wedding Issue) .... 1.95/**1.50**
The actual Wedding! Includes 3 X-Men Fleer Cards!

# IMAGE

Reg. / Sale

Bloodstrike 5,6 (**New!**) ..... 1.95/**1.75**
Codename: Stryke Force 1 .. 1.95/**1.75**
Cyberforce 3 (**All new!**) ..... 1.95/**1.75**
Freak Force 1,2 (Erik Larsen) 1.95/**1.75**
Maxx 6,7 (Sam Kieth art) ... 1.95/**1.75**
Prophet 3 (**New!** - Liefeld) . 1.95/**1.75**
Savage Dragon 7 (Larsen) . 1.95/**1.75**
Shadowhawk III #2 ..... 2.50/**1.95**
New Shadowhawk series by Valentino!
Shadowhawk Fact File Trade $13/**9.95**
Spawn 17,18 (Morrison) ... 1.95/**1.75**
A gripping new story by Grant Morrison!
StormWatch 7 (Brett Booth) 1.95/**1.75**
StormWatch Yearbook 1 .... 3.50/**2.95**
Great new 48 page story! Great art!
Supreme 8 (Rob Liefeld) ..... 1.95/**1.75**
Team Youngblood 4 ..... 1.95/**1.75**
Vanguard 3 (Erik Larsen) ... 1.95/**1.75**
Wild CATS 7 (Jim Lee) ..... 1.95/**1.75**

## Comic Grab Bags

**Collector Grab Bag** ..... **$6.95**
10 very valuable comics! Lots of #1's!
**Comic Surprise** (20 comics) ... **$9.00**
Contains 20 different superhero comics!
**Image Grab Bag** (5 comics) .. **$4.95**
**Marvel Grab Bag** (10 items) .. **$6.95**
Contains 10 different Marvel comics!

# MARVEL

Reg./Sale

Alpha Flight 130 (48 pgs) .. 2.25/**1.75**
Lots of characters die! Last issue!
Amaz Spiderman 387 ..... 1.25/ **.99**
Beavis & Butt-Head 1 (**New**) 1.95/**1.75**
Cable 9 (vs. Omega Red) 2.00/**1.75**
Cosmic Powers 1 (**New!**) 2.50/**1.95**
Thanos storyline! Art by Ron Lim!
Cap America 325 ..... 2.95/**2.50**
Daredevil 326 (New DD!) 1.25/ **.99**
The adventures of the new Daredevil!
Excalibur 75 (48 pages) . 3.50/**2.95**
All new team of Marvel superheroes!
Force Works 1 (**New!**) ..... 3.50/**2.95**
Marvels 2,3 (Fully Painted) . 5.95/**4.95**
New Warriors 45 (X-Force) 1.25/ **.99**
Punisher 88 (Death!) ..... 1.25/ **.99**
Punisher War Journal 64 . 2.95/**2.50**
Spiderman Mutant Agenda 1 1.75/**1.50**
The Shroud 1 (vs. Scorpion) 1.75/**1.50**
Uncanny X-Men 310 (cards) 1.95/**1.50**
Venom Enemy Within 1,2 . 2.95/**2.50**
Wolverine 79 (vs. Cyber) . 1.75/**1.50**
X-Factor 100 (Foil cover!) 2.95/**2.50**
Death of a major character! 48 pgs!
X-Force 32 (New Warriors) 1.25/ **.99**
X-Men 30 (Wedding!!!) .... 1.95/**1.50**
X-Men 2099 #6 ..... 1.25/ **.99**
X-Men Adventures II 1,2 ... 1.25/ **.99**
X-Men Unlimited 4 (64 pgs) 3.95/**3.50**
X-Men Wedding Magazine 3.95/**3.50**

# ULTRAVERSE

Reg./Sale

Breakthru 1,2 (Perez art!) .... 2.50/**1.95**
Firearm 5 or Freex 7 ..... 1.95/**1.75**
Hardcase 8 (Origin) ..... 1.95/**1.75**
Mantra 7 (Guests Prime) 1.95/**1.75**
Nightman 4 or Prime 8 ... 1.95/**1.75**
Prime 8 (Hot!) ..... 1.95/**1.75**
Prototype 6 or Sludge 4 .. 1.95/**1.75**
Rune 1 (Barry Smith art) . 1.95/**1.75**
New monthly title! Barry Smith art!
Solitaire 3 (Origin) ..... 1.95/**1.75**
Solution 5 or Strangers 8 .. 1.95/**1.75**
Wrath 1 (**All new!**) ..... 1.95/**1.75**
All new superhero title by Mike Barr!

# VALIANT

Reg./ Sale

Bloodshot #0 (Origin!) ..... 3.50/**2.95**
Origin of Bloodshot! Chromium cover!
Magnus vs. Nexus 1,2 ..... 2.25/**1.75**
All new by Mike Baron & Steve Rude!
Ninjak 3 (Quesada art) ..... 2.25/**1.75**
Shadowman #0 (Origin) ... 3.50/**2.95**
Origin of Shadowman! Chromium cover!
Shadowman Trade (1st Print) $10/**7.95**
Issues #1-3 & 6 plus separate new comic!
Valiant Era Trade (1st Print) $14/**10.95**
Rare stories plus a separate new comic!
X-O Manowar 27 (**Hot!**) .... 2.25/**1.75**

# NEW CARDS

**Sandman Premium** (Per Pack) **2.00**
**Sandman Premium** (Box) ..... **59.95**
Premium 90 card series! Great art!
**Simpsons Comic Cards** (Pack) **1.50**
**Simpsons Comic** (Box) ..... **39.95**
New premium 100 card series! Hot!
**X-Men Fleer Ultra Cards** (Pack) **1.50**
**X-Men Fleer Ultra** (Box - Lim 1) **52.95**
Sealed Box contains 360 cards! Lim 1!

## Comic Supplies

50 Regular Backing Boards . **$3.95**
100 Regular Comic Bags ..... **$4.50**

## Entertainment This Month

**Box 470-E51CS**
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1. Orders sent by Jan 6th get a Free full color X-Men poster & a limited uncut sheet of Fleer X-Men cards!
2. Orders begin shipping on Jan. 31! (Allow 3-6 weeks for shipping.)
3. All items are guaranteed in like new, Mint-Near Mint, condition!
4. Prices are per each issue or item!
5. The minimum order is $15.
6. U.S. add $3.95 for shipping. Canada $4.95, Foreign $7.95. (Free shipping for orders over $100!)
7. Add extra $1 for insurance.
8. Enclose check or money order. Payment in U.S. funds only.
9. Phone or fax credit card orders! Call 9-6 pm Mon-Fri (EST). Fax anytime to 703-330-6200.
10. Orders received after Jan 27th, 1994 may receive limits on hot items & will ship in 4-6 weeks.

We reserve the right to update prices, limit quantities, & refuse any order. Not responsible for publisher delays! Ad expires 2/15/94. Send $1 for our new catalog after then! **Thanks!**

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